

# His Good Angel

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## addicted fan

Star Wars

Complete



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## **His Good Angel**

**addicted fan**

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## Summary

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### Description:

Just as Darth Vader is about to interrogate Princess Leia, the Force sends the spirit of Padme back into the galaxy.

# Chapter 1

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## His Good Angel

Disclaimer: Not mine. It's all Lucas. I've read so much fanfic that I can't help but be inspired by other authors' ideas. This is just my take on the Vader and family what ifs. I hope I am formatting and posting this correctly.

## His Good Angel ANH AU V/P L/H L

The man who had once identified himself as Anakin Skywalker stormed through the corridors of the Death Star determined to interrogate the treacherous ambassador. In a bleak cell, Princess Leia tried to ready herself to remain steadfast in the face of torture. And the Force, aware that horrors were moments away from being, released the spirit of Padmé back into the galaxy.

The interrogation droid came nearer, ever nearer. Leia's eyes widened in terror and despair as the needle approached. She didn't want to look at the droid. She didn't want to look at the black masked menace in the corner of the room, either. Her soul cried out for help. Perhaps the injection had already started because Leia could not account for what happened next.

The lady shimmered, outlined in blue light, appearing in the space between Vader and Leia. Vader stepped forward almost involuntarily.

"Padmé," his word should have been a whisper, but the vocalizer prevented any soft sounds.

Leia knew she had heard the name before. She knew she had seen this woman's face.

"No! This is a trick!" His hand reached out as if about to clench into a fist. "Who put you up to this?" he growled.

The woman backed away. Her own hands began to reach up to her throat. "Anakin?" her voice questioned shakily.

Darth Vader stared in horror at his closing fist. Quickly he opened his grasp.

"Anakin, what's happened to you?" the woman gasped.

"He's Darth Vader," Leia interrupted.

"Be quiet, Princess," Darth Vader ordered. His attention was focused almost entirely on the blue specter. "Padmé?" The dark lord of the Sith reached out to the woman again, this time gently. His black gloved fingers just touched the light flowing at the end of her hair.

It might be the injection that was causing her to hallucinate ghosts and an enemy who could only be described as yearning but Leia was never one to miss an opportunity. If Darth Vader were distracted by the strange presence, than Leia would use this chance to escape.

Slowly, Leia sidled off the ferracrete bunk. She needed to some way to stop Lord Vader. If only she had a blaster...

“This can’t be real,” Darth Vader expressed in what would have been a mutter if his vocalizer allowed him to mutter.

Somehow Leia was not at all comforted that the Dark Lord of the Sith considered himself to be having a moment so divorced from reality.

The woman in blue moved closer. “Oh, Anakin.” Her hand reached out to touch the hard black mask. Her face expressed a mixture of horror and pity.

Almost as if by reflex, the rage caused him to bite out “that name has...” he stopped himself from completing the thought. In the face of this miracle, with this chance to see Padmé again, he didn’t dare deny anything. He had already given up so much.

He reached out to her as if to draw her into his embrace. Padmé inched forward before collapsing on the hard ground of the cell.

“Noooo!” he wailed.

Leia turned to look at the monster, her enemy, reputedly heartless, and now crouched on the floor by the fading blue presence. Even dumbstruck as she was by the sight, Leia knew she needed to take this opportunity to escape. She moved toward the door.

Darth Vader’s mask turned to face the Princess. “Help me. Please. I’ll do anything. Only, I cannot lose her again.”

Leia’s heart seemed to stop. It had to be the drugs. How else could she explain this bizarre situation?

It was the second time in his life that he made that offer. The second time that he had submitted himself to another, asking only for the life of his beloved. Logically, it didn’t make sense that this girl... but he was not using logic. The force swirled around him chaotically: hope and despair, love, need, anger, and loss all emanating from the man who had been the Chosen One.

“She’s not corporeal. And even if she were, I am not a healer,” Leia muttered, edging closer to the door. “I don’t even think a medical droid would help.”

He bent towards the woman who seemed to be fading. “Padmé, please don’t leave me again. Please. Stay.”

The woman’s lips seemed to move. “Ani...” Then the spectral presence disappeared.

Leia was unprepared for the storm. The Dark Lord of the Sith seemed still but nothing else was. The lights sparked. The droid seemed to flop about the room, banging against walls violently. Leia backed up against the wall. She had been prepared to deal with ruthless torture. She had been expecting to face the cold and unrelenting hatred of the Emperor’s enforcer. This frenzy... Leia didn’t even know how to classify what this was.

She was terrified. The moment she had been captured, Leia had expected her life to be forfeit. But not like this. She would not lose, a casualty of a madman’s anguish. She grabbed hold of the interrogation droid. It was a weapon she could use. As Darth Vader came towards her she tried to calculate where his armor might be vulnerable. How likely was it that she could defend herself?

...

He awoke in Med Bay to the feel of millions of voices screaming in agony. At first, Vader thought he was remembering the past, the horror of slaying his compatriots in order to attain the power of the Dark Side, in order to save Padmé. The Emperor would not be pleased. In the long lonely years since his turn, Vader had forced himself to compensate for his new physical limitations. His one attempt to overthrow Palpatine had failed and Vader had resigned himself to working for his master and somehow achieving stability and order in this new Empire. He could not save his loved ones but he could ensure his place. It was not the place he wanted... but he would not be passed over.

He would not, could not explain the vision. He had tried so hard not to think about his beloved wife. He was not strong enough to live on that pain. Sometimes, he tried to tell himself that he was better off without her. After all, she had betrayed him with Kenobi, brought his master to Mustafar to kill him. Instead, after all he had done, he had killed her. The physical agony he experienced daily was something he could cope with. He was not able to lose her again and again in his nightmares and now in this vision.

He felt a familiar force presence. Obi-Wan, his former master, was on board this abomination of a space station. He could leave the med bay and track down his old mentor and achieve vengeance for the hollow wreck he had become. But Vader felt weak. Loss was too fresh. Another presence was on the edge of his perception, soothing him, but he could not reach it. Padmé's loss was a ripped open scar, his emotions still bleeding out and he sank back into oblivion.

A weak pale blue presence stood by Vader's bed watching as the equipment monitored her husband's vital statistics.

"Ani, wake up," she whispered. But her presence in the force was not strong enough to carry her words. She had tried to return earlier. Aside from the desire to see Ani again, there was something she felt she had to do, some purpose which she had not yet accomplished. She did not have control; she was not strong enough. Padmé flickered out again.

...

"Ready my craft," Vader commanded. The inactivity had reawakened his need for motion. In space he could focus on the present. He could use his gifts well and destroy the rebels threatening the empire.

He should be sick of battle. Throughout the hellish years of the Clone War, he had been sent from mission to mission, a trained killer. Chasing after Dooku and Ventress, responsible for the lives of his clone troops, Anakin found himself on the battlefield. In the old days, he dreamed of a more peaceful existence, twining his heart, body, and days about Padmé. Yes, he had traded his honor and his vows for the chance to truly wield the full power of the force, for the ability to save Padmé as he could not save his mother. Still, the young man who had been horrified and glad at killing an entire tribe of Tusken raiders was almost completely swept away in the months of methodical killing. He was a killer long before he ascended the Temple steps and it was the Council who had supported his bloody deeds. Oh, the sanctimonious Jedi might preach that their attitude made all the difference — but did those he destroyed in battle care why he ended them? Only the Jedi could be hypocritical enough to harp on letting go.



In the cockpit, Vader focused on the rebels. Separatist or Rebel, threats to the empire mocked all he had been through. As he aimed at the enemy craft in front of him, Vader spared a thought for whoever had been responsible for the hallucination/vision. There had been assassination attempts before. Perhaps Prince Xixor had finally used his vast informational resources to uncover... Or perhaps this was even a test from his master who claimed to foresee all. For a moment Vader's rage was once again directed towards his master who had cheated Vader of all he truly wanted and condemned him to a half-life as a creature of terror. Not that Vader didn't enjoy the fear he caused, he had truly grown to enjoy his power — what he still could grasp. But Palpatine had no right to...if it was Palpatine.

He concentrated once again on his task — protecting this abomination of a space station. One of these pilots seemed to shine in the force. Vader had hunted down all the Jedi. All save his former master and Yoda. This pilot, radiating power and light in the way he used to seemed to mock him. This pilot would learn the power of the dark side. Vader took aim.

...

"You have done well, Luke," Obi-Wan smiled at the young pilot. He tried hard not to think of another pilot hurtling in space after nearly destroying his unknown child. But he couldn't help but dwell on his former padawan.

Vader seemed strangely absent, not counting his recent defense of the Death Star. Obi-Wan was surprised. He had expected to fight Vader during Leia's rescue. Weary of the years, he had almost looked forward to joining the force and finding peace. It seemed he would be a teacher once again. And teaching Skywalkers had never brought peace.

...

She managed to appear again as he lay concussed in the cockpit of his TIE Interceptor.

"Ani"

He knew he must be going out of his mind. Some system must be malfunctioning. Why else would he see this woman he had killed?

"Ani you must..."

"I must stop imagining you? That's what I should do for the sake of my sanity." He was angry as always that the universe was playing a joke on him. He was frightened about what it meant that he was seeing Padmé. Was he finally dying? Were his systems finally failing? Somehow, after the long, lonely years, Vader could no longer look on death as a complete negative. But he had no intention of dying, yet. He had so much he wanted to do. Such as killing Palpatine because his sithspawn master had never told him about this.

"You're not imagining me."

"Haunting me then. It took twenty years for you to get your revenge but I'd rather you torment me from beyond the grave than leave me again."

"I never told you, Ani, but sometimes you sound like a bad holodrama."

He was incensed and hurt. "This is what you wish to say to me?"

"You're lucky I'm willing to say anything to you at all after you choked me."

There was so much he wanted to say. For accuracy's sake he wanted to remind her of her perfidy. He had offered her the empire and she had rejected him. Vader sighed heavily. "You're still beautiful."

"For a ghost?"

"For anything," he paused, the silence only broken by the rhythmic rasp of his ventilator. "I... I didn't mean to kill you."

"You didn't kill me," Padmé looked at him in shock. "Crushing my throat because you thought I had betrayed you didn't help. But you didn't kill me."

"Palpatine said..."

"Oh, yes! Believe everything he says! Did he ever teach you the full power of the Dark Side? Those new powers worked out so well."

"I was desperate. Yoda wouldn't help me. I thought Palpatine was my friend. You thought so too, once." He hadn't understood why she had changed her mind. He had refused to understand. He had given Palpatine his loyalty — until he became a sith and learned that loyalty was only a waiting game. Perhaps Padmé as a politician had always known that, had as little understanding of the bonds of friendship and love as Obi-Wan.

"I know. I don't think I shall ever forgive myself for that." The light surrounding Padmé dimmed.

"Angel... You... I didn't mean to hurt you." He was frightened. Hallucination, vision, emanation, whatever Padmé was, she was here with him once again and he could not let her go.

"On Mustafar?"

"Then. Now. Ever."

"I forgave you long ago." Her image flickered and she said, "I can't stay. But I'll try to return as soon as I get accustomed to this."

...

The weeks following his return were filled with confusion for Vader. Called to the Emperor for punishment at losing the Death Star, Vader submitted as the Emperor's Hand severed one of his mechanical limbs as humiliation, punishment, and warning combined. Like he had when he was younger and Watto's slave, Vader hid his true thoughts from his master and bided his time. Perhaps he had dreamed the episode. Perhaps Padmé was called up from his subconscious. But if she was indeed real then it was time to delve into Sith lore and learn the power to keep her with him.

...

It had been weeks since the Battle of Yavin, weeks since Leia had reported the details of her rescue. She had not mentioned the strange interlude with Darth Vader. If it were not for his absence when Tarkin obliterated Alderaan, Leia would have thought she had imagined the entire affair. Tarkin had been both thrilled at the Sith Lord's absence and chagrined at not having Vader witness to the Death Star's power. But Vader, according to the former Moff, had

been recuperating in Med Bay. The stormtroopers who had rushed in to check on Vader hadn't seen the woman, so Leia could only assume whatever she saw a product of the drugs. Vader's suit was rumored to be life support as much as armor. He had had a malfunction. Leia wondered if it were possible to exploit the Sith Lord's health issues in combat. His collapse must have been due to ill health. The Princess refused to acknowledge her memories of an emotionally vulnerable Sith Lord.

It was hard enough to mourn for a planet, to heal from the second attempt at interrogation. A few hours after Vader was escorted away from her cell, Tarkin's henchmen and the droid returned. Torture was never pleasant, even without the threat of Vader ripping her secrets from her mind. Still, Leia had felt relief that she would not have to work quite so hard to defend her thoughts. With Vader out of the picture, she had had a greater chance.

...

Obi-Wan intended to train Luke further in the ways of the force. Somehow, he found himself dealing with Alliance protocol. General Kenobi the great Negotiator was a valuable resource and the Alliance sent Obi-Wan on numerous missions. While Obi-Wan regretted the occasions when he was separated from Luke he completely disliked the interrogation by the Alliance leaders. Mon Mothma had been a politician, a group he still devoutly distrusted. More significantly, Mon Mothma knew the old stories, knew enough to know Jedi were not supposed to have offspring. For one half of Kenobi and Skywalker to show up with a young man with force ability and the last name of a missing hero...

Obi-Wan felt his skills at avoiding questions were growing. He had inspired Luke with stories of a heroic deceased parent. Until he explained matters fully to the boy he would not reveal information to anyone else. Besides, the words he spoke were the truth from a certain point of view.

If Obi-Wan had watched more closely, if he had allowed himself to notice Luke's idolization of the Princess of Alderaan, he might have considered telling more, much more quickly.

...

She found him staring at a photograph on a datapad. Hovering over his shoulder, she stared at the blond, blue-eyed young man who looked so much like her Ani.

"We have a son," he rasped. "All these years... on Tatooine. Padmé, we had a son."

"He's so tall. He was just a baby when he left my arms....and now..." Padmé broke off. "But what about our daughter?"

"A daughter?"

"We had twins. The file doesn't mention his sister. Oh, Ani, you don't think she's..." she couldn't say the word.

"I don't know. I never knew." He longed to enfold Padmé in his arms, longed to comfort her, but he couldn't. Together once again, they were still cruelly separated.

Silently Vader made a promise. He would have his family again. He had as yet made no progress in his research. In twenty years he had not made much progress on healing himself

through the force — he was only able to survive without the mask for a few short seconds. Still, he had this new chance. As for his son, a smile creased Vader's face, twisting the scars. As for his son, he symbolized hope — not for the rebellion the boy misguidedly fought for, but for Vader's chance to free himself from Palpatine and create a world where he and his family would be free and secure. He would place a bounty on Luke to be brought to him alive. He would track his child across the galaxy. He'd have to disguise this from the Emperor but that was nothing new. Palpatine and Vader lived in an atmosphere of mutual distrust. The calm he experienced around the powerful force user, the times when Palpatine favored him with his thoughts, none of that mattered in the face of the larger betrayal.

His daughter. Vader hoped she was alive and he raged against the fate that brought him joy with one hand and withheld it with the other. For years he had feared nothing, for he had had nothing. Now with hope, fear battered against his tender heart once more.

He looked at Padmé who was still staring at the image of their boy. There was so much he wanted to say to her, was afraid to say to her. Once he would have felt supreme confidence in his powers. Then, Obi-Wan had left him burning in the fires of Mustafar and while he had learned to be strong, forceful, decisive, to expect perfection of his men because he himself still excelled whether in flying or in combat, he had failed at everything that truly mattered to him. Now the tasks facing him seemed monumental. Could he bring Padmé back to a more solid state, heal his body so he could be with her, bond with his son, find his daughter, overthrow Palpatine....? The list seemed overwhelming. As Anakin Skywalker he had nearly always accomplished the impossible. The nearly might as well have been the greatest chasm. Vader shook himself from his reflections. He had always preferred, indeed relied on, action.

"I feel so helpless," Padmé complained. "I died. I was heartbroken and just"

"Gave up. What happened to the woman who battled a nexu on Geonosis?"

"What happened to the man I married?" she retorted.

"More machine than man. I never thought..."

"I know that. It was rare for the Hero without Fear to think." She smiled reminiscing.

...

Anakin's children were a handful, Obi-Wan thought once again, rubbing at his bearded chin. Nothing could warm Hoth, but the sparks flying between Leia and Captain Solo came close. The rest of the base might be entertained by the tension between the not yet couple, but Obi-Wan could only wonder what Padmé would think of her daughter and the brash flyboy. Then again, he had thought Padmé more level headed than to secretly marry a Jedi. He had warned the Senator, but like all politicians she said one thing and did another.

Leia seemed so like Padmé with her dedication, her desire to champion, but the fire that burned in her, the anger which ignited so easily, was a trademark of Anakin. A dangerous heritage.

But was it any more dangerous than Leia kissing Luke? The gossip was already making its way and like all gossip many variations proliferated.

...

“What are you doing?” she demanded.

He couldn’t answer fully. They were on the bridge of the Executor and Hoth was on the viewscreen.

“Not now,” he thought hoping she would understand but knowing that the tilt of his helmet and the twitch of his gauntleted hands was not enough to convey his meaning.

But Padmé would not be ignored. Telling Admiral Ozzel and General Veers to wait for his word, he walked back to his chambers and privacy.

“You can’t endanger him like this.”

“He is a skilled pilot, strong in the force. He brought down Palpatine’s pet project.”

“Which just means he is in the thick of things. I spent the entire war wondering if I would be a secret widow.”

“You made me a widower,” Vader accused. How dare she use that against him? He had grown used to command. Perhaps a part of him would always feel awed that a slave could win the heart of a former queen, but said former queen needed to learn...

“We are not rehashing my death. You shouldn’t have choked me. I shouldn’t have yielded to death...”

“I worried about you before. I would dream of you safe and then you’d be kidnapped or contaminated with a virus. I remember when I first saw a real angel on the moons of Iego. She was beautiful but she could have been a Hutt compared to you. I dreamed of you night after night. The council sent me into situations I would never have chosen, risking my life for a Hutt’s spawn when the Hutts had made my mother and me slaves. You were the one good left in my life. My good angel.”

“You always knew what to say to me,” Padmé said a tear snaking its way down her cheek. Was it Anakin’s imagination or was her form becoming more opaque?

“No more bad holodrama?”

“Not unless you want to tell me I’ve grown shorter,” she smiled.

He reached out to touch the tear on her cheek, shocked that he was able to touch both the salty drop and the soft flesh beneath.

Tenderly as if she were the most fragile thing in existence, as if she would disappear like all his dreams, Vader enfolded Padmé in his arms.

“How?” he asked her.

Once he was the Chosen One, born of the force. He should not be surprised by miracles.

## Chapter 2

---

Padmé surrendered to joy. She was in her husband's arms. She could feel his gloved fingers playing with her curls. Grateful for the fate, which once again allowed them to touch, Padmé still yearned for more. As always, she needed him. Afraid of the answer, she nevertheless asked, "Ani, can you take your mask off?"

"In my hyperbaric chamber"

"Can we go there? I want..."

They were already in Vader's quarters, it was only a few steps to the chamber, which taunted him with freedom he no longer had. He waited while the claw descended and removed his mask. He waited again to turn around. "I'm no longer..."

She knew that. She knew he was no longer the handsome boy who ardently pleaded for her love. How could she soothe his fears when she couldn't possibly imagine what horrors were concealed behind his armor. And yet, how could she choose not to know, not to be with him. "Anakin, we're both alive. If you're delaying because you're no longer..."

He interrupted her. "This is who I am now." She hoped desperately that he referred only to his physical self and not to his embracing the dark side.

He turned around and Padmé struggled not to gasp. All thoughts of dark side or light side seemed irrelevant when he was here before her, waiting. "You must have been in so much pain."

"The greatest pain was not being able to be with you like this."

As always his awkward yet heartfelt flattery caused her to melt. She rushed towards him. In an instant, her arms were about him and her lips were pressed to his. The skin beneath her palms was riddled with scars. He was not the Anakin she knew, not physically. And yet, this poor wounded man whose lips pressed hungrily, greedily against hers, who had uttered such passionate phrases, was the same man who had once pleaded for her love in a firelit room in Varykino.

And suddenly she was crying. He pulled back reluctantly and questioned "Padmé?"

"Oh Ani, your hair. Your beautiful hair."

She hadn't meant to say anything about his appearance. The moment he turned to take off his mask, she had vowed not to add to his distress. Anxiously, Padmé looked up through her damp lashes, to see her husband's startled face.

He bent towards her again. His lips met hers hungrily; once again he was the confident lover instead of a tentative monster. She yielded yet again to the flames of desire his presence always sparked. Every part of her newly resurrected body was singing a thank you that she could feel this way once more.

They broke apart. Her heart nearly broke again witnessing his labored breathing. Her own breathing was unsteady but that was due to passion.

“Do you need to put on the mask?”

“Perhaps. Let me try this first.” Vader moved to open the hyperbaric chamber and then paused. “Veers is outside.”

“Just like the old days,” she commented wryly.

He replaced his mask, stepped in front of her, using his height to block her from view. Slowly, the hyperbaric chamber opened.

....

It had been habit. Simply habit. Anger at Ozzel’s incompetence, the possibility of that idiot not merely alerting the rebels to his attack but also allowing his son to escape, prompted him to force choke the officer. He hadn’t considered Padmé. He hadn’t thought.

She lay on a bunk in the medbay. Dark bruises ringed her neck. Her breathing was labored.

He hadn’t touched her. He would never, could never touch her in anger again. Why then had his attack on Ozzel sent Padmé to the floor? When he realized what he had done — and he knew, he knew without a shadow of a doubt that this was his fault — anger had been swept away by fear, by grief, by despair. She had to be alright.

....

On Hoth, a worried Obi-Wan Kenobi tried desperately to grab a moment with Luke.

“You must go to Dagobah, Luke. Yoda is there. He taught me. He will teach you.”

“Why can’t you continue to train me, Ben?”

It was too dangerous, Obi-wan thought. The empire had placed a bounty on Luke’s head. While some of that was the result of Luke’s heroic deed blowing up the Death Star, Obi-Wan had a bad feeling that the stipulation, Luke be taken alive, meant Vader had discovered the existence of his offspring. Luke must not fall into his father’s hands.

“Vader searches for you relentlessly,” Obi-Wan remarked with the mixture of half-truths he had grown accustomed to when speaking with Luke. “Dagobah is safer. Besides, you will be training with the greatest Jedi master. Promise me you will go.”

As Luke nodded his head, Obi-Wan felt a wave of relief. He should never have trained Anakin. He had loved the boy too much to see the darkness in him. And though Luke seemed so unlike his father temperamentally, Obi-Wan felt relieved that this time Yoda would bear the responsibility.

...

He was arrogant and brash and not at all the type of man she should be interested in, but he had kissed her and if they hadn’t been interrupted... She was not a starry-eyed child but a capable leader who needed to remember her priorities. They did not include a hot shot pilot who constantly reminded her he was leaving. Even if he hadn’t left yet.

She didn't want to fall in love only to find herself alone. Day after day she tried to keep herself together for the sake of the Alliance, for the memory of her world. It would be easy to lose herself with Han. But she knew, she knew that the force pulling them together would leave her aching when he eventually left.

A memory surfaced of Darth Vader pleading. Resolutely she blocked that out. It couldn't have been real. And anyway, she had nothing in common with that monster.

....

Yoda remained in a corner of his Dagobah home, watching Anakin's son impatiently await his meeting with a great Jedi master. Too old the boy was. Too reckless. Too willing to rush when he should stop and sense.

The boy was too old. Yoda remembered the padawans of the temple. Bright, loving, curious, they were once the future of the Jedi. He was too old to train another.

Able to let go a Jedi must. He too, must rid himself of his disappointments, his failures. The Dark Side still clouded the future, more than ever. Still, he must train this boy.

Refraining from correcting the boy's mistaken impression, Yoda continued to test Luke.

....

"He told you that? That Luke must be destroyed."

Vader nodded, remembering the interview with his master. When the Emperor had spoken of a disturbance in the force, Vader had desperately tried to shield his thoughts, his feelings, wondering if the sith knew about Padmé. For a moment, he had hoped that the Emperor did know. He might have forgiven years of mistrust, forgiven even the lie that he had killed his beloved, swept all those considerations aside, if only his master could have explained this to him, could have helped him.

"I suggested it would be more effective if Luke is turned to the dark side. I said he will join us or die."

She gasped. One hand went to her throat, still sporting the purplish bruises. He looked away for a moment. "He will join us, Padmé. Us, not the Emperor. I only said that to divert the emperor. He thinks that..."

"He thinks he has taken every human impulse from you."

"Yes."

She looked at him, "he knows about Luke."

"We will find Luke, Padmé. I will bring him to us and then we can protect him."

.....

Captain Needa had lost them. Needa was lucky to be alive, even if he had been removed from his post. Although Vader desperately wanted to choke the incompetent officer, he worried that with this unwanted link between his aggressive use of the force and Padmé's health that...



The med droids did not recognize Padmé as a living being. Vader could see her, touch her, kiss her within the confines of his hyperbaric chamber, but according to the medical reports she did not exist.

He was the only one who could see his wife and while that made it relatively easy to disguise her presence from Palpatine's spies, always assuming his master truly did not know, it did make Vader question if any of this was real. And then, he would remember the princess, edging past him, as he pleaded. In a way, the knowledge that she too had seen Padmé comforted him more than even his wife's hand resting in his. He had dreamed of Padmé before only to awake to loss and pain. But the princess had seen. If he weren't worried about how it would impact Padmé, he might use the force to seek answers. Well, the bounty hunters would find *The Millenium Falcon* soon enough. He would be able to question the Princess Leia personally. He would use the rebels to lure his son to him. And together, Luke and he would surely wield enough power to compel the force to do their bidding.

(A.N. Thank you so much everyone who reviewed. I really appreciate your comments.)

## Chapter 3

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Padmé paced the confines of her husband's chamber. She wanted to be with him, asking for news of their son. Instead, she remained in this room, a prisoner in fact if not in name. With every fiber of her being she trusted the love in Ani's heart, the love that somehow had helped to bring them together again. And yet...

He was so different. He had led during the war. Gained the loyalty of the clone troops for his bravery and ability to pull some sort of success from almost certain defeat. Now, hidden behind that awful suit, he dominated through fear. What he had done to that Admiral Ozzel...

She had forgiven Mustafar but she could not forget. While she had never heard the force, her years as the friends of and as the wife of a Jedi taught her to listen to her instincts. Those instincts told her that Anakin needed her there with him.

He worried because in this new state, she seemed incredibly fragile. She slept more than she ever had. Days would pass and she would wake to Anakin sitting by her side, scrolling through data cards. He had always been hypocritical when it came to the danger they faced. He had always been willing to recklessly endanger himself as long as his loved ones remained protected. He hadn't said anything to her, but she could tell, he feared they were running out of time.

She couldn't sit here and let him fight alone. As a queen, she had fought for her country. As a senator, she had fought. She still needed to fight. As a wife, as a mother, Padmé knew she needed to be on Bespin helping her family. It was time to plan an escape.

...

He watched the man face what might very well be his death. Watched the girl strain towards them. Saw a kiss that might be their last. He couldn't help but be reminded of Geonosis. Even the gold droid in the background, so like the one he had built as a child, reminded him of the day Padmé finally admitted she loved him. He felt confused. Spies claimed his son was close to the Princess. He had gotten used to thinking of Luke and the girl as history repeating itself, the slave and the queen now retold as the farmboy and the princess. But now it was clear that while imminent death might spur lovers to one heightened moment of sharing each other's souls, his son remained a friend. The malice that usually accompanied Vader's thoughts returned, renewing his satisfaction at torturing the smuggler who presumed to usurp his son's place in the princess' heart.

He wished he could feel satisfaction at giving Han Solo to Boba Fett. His history with Fett was complicated. Jango's death years before after his ruthless attacks on Padmé cemented the antagonism Vader felt for anyone carrying the Fett name. It was a mark of Vader's desperation to find his son that he had even hired Fett, forming resentment among his crew. Vader knew that Solo would be sent to Jabba. That vexed the Sith Lord as well. All these years and Jabba still ruled his fiefdom of gangsters and scum. Dealing with Jabba, even indirectly, provided a painful reminder of the death of his idealism. Of course that idealism had first been cracked by his old Jedi masters who didn't lift a finger to stop the slavery on

Tatooine and who had decades earlier ordered him to find and return Jabba's brat. He had dreamed of freeing the slaves and now... now he had more in common with Jabba as a ruthless father determined to be reunited with his offspring. At least he knew Luke was alive.

...

"Admiral Piett, a TIE fighter has left unauthorized."

"Who's piloting?"

"That's just it sir. There doesn't seem to be anyone aboard. Should I inform Lord Vader?"

Admiral Piett swallowed. In spite of Vader's unusual mercy towards Captain Needa, no one wished to test the Sith's patience. "Perhaps I should inform him myself."

...

"She's here."

"Padmé! What are you doing here?"

"I came to be with you. And I saw her. Well her file actually. But she's here."

"What?" Anakin looked in astonishment at his wife who was glowing with an inner happiness.

"I saw her Ani. She's alive. Our Leia is alive."

"Leia?"

"Yes."

Anakin sank down heavily in a chair. "The princess?" He knew the answer already. He would have tortured her that day. He had tortured the man she loved. Reflexively, he lashed out "You couldn't have discovered this earlier? She was in the room on the day you came back to me! Why didn't you tell me?" He should have known the princess looked so much like Padmé and was an even greater pain.

"She was there? Forgive me for being brought back from the dead and only able to concentrate on one person at a time."

"You're right. This is not your fault."

"Ani, what have you done now?" How many times would she have to listen to the unforgivable? How many times would she try to forgive anyway? Loving him was the only way she knew how to live. And it wasn't even about her forgiveness anymore. What had he done to their daughter?

"Han Solo is encased in carbonite on Boba Fett's ship."

Padmé was puzzled.

"Apparently, our daughter and this imperial reject... Padmé how was I to know?"

He had rarely heard Padmé curse. Amusement briefly eased the battle between joy and anguish — after twenty years of daily hatred and agony he did not know how to control his long-repressed emotions. Obi-Wan might say he never did.

....

Obi-Wan was currently trying to maintain his fabled Jedi calm in the swamps of Dagobah. "What do you mean he left?"

"In trouble his companions were. Ignore my advice he did. Rash and impatient like his father."

Obi-Wan stiffened at the comparison. "Luke has inherited Anakin's skill, yes. But he is not his father."

"Know that I do. Know what he will do when he meets Vader I do not."

Obi-Wan sighed. The Dark Side clouded everything. Still, these past months, since the escape from the Death Star, he had felt renewed hope. Instead of sacrificing himself in one last battle, he had reentered the world, joined the alliance, and become a dynamic force for good again. For twenty years he had been afraid to hope too much and now Anakin's children, the very beings who symbolized how little his former padawan cared for Jedi tenets... "I told him his father was dead. I told him Vader killed Anakin."

"True this is."

"From a certain point of view."

...

"How could you even consider lowering our son into a pit of carbonite?"

"Medically, Solo is fine. I would not have harmed our son."

"Then what would you have done? Wrapped a ribbon round him and given him to the emperor?"

"No. Padmé, I just need time to talk with him. To explain."

"It's certainly the convoluted, ridiculous type of plan only you would come up with. Give me an explanation of why you tortured your son's friend and sent him off to Jabba."

"It was necessary to bring him here."

"You know that's not true. It was convenient for you, but not necessary."

"I..."

"Anakin, I love you but that doesn't mean I will sit idly by while you make even greater mistakes."

"I was doing what had to be done."

"When? Are you referring to slaughtering the Jedi, believing me guilty of betraying you, choking me, terrorizing the galaxy for twenty years, terrorizing our children, torturing the man our daughter loves, and plotting against our son? Or is there some other despicable action you are trying to rationalize?"

He could have hated her in that moment. "What would you have me do? The Emperor knows I resent him and want to supplant him. He believes me too weak to do more than

grumble and for the most part he is right. I am too weak to battle him alone. I tried before and was spared — though at the time I considered that even more of a punishment. I need our son's help. Together, we can overthrow Palpatine and..."

"Rule the galaxy. Are you still that power hungry?"

"I just want order. I just want to be able to find peace with my family. But that will never happen unless we take control."

Padmé sighed, "You're right."

He turned toward her in shock. "You didn't think so on Mustafar."

"On Mustafar you didn't sound..." She broke off. "I was horrified. I was desperate. I didn't want to believe and I didn't want to change. I didn't fear for myself so I didn't understand why..."

Vader thought back to the massacre at the Jedi temple. "I needed to believe in something, in somebody. The force... Everything was changing. The Jedi had already changed and yet they demanded the same sacrifices, the same adherence to an outdated code. I thought, I truly thought... And Palpatine told me that with the power of the Dark Side..."

"We can't reason with Palpatine. But you can reason with our children. This subterfuge will only make it harder for them to trust you. Your children are not your enemy."

....

"Admiral Piett, a change in plans. Contact Fett and offer him double his fee to return Solo to us."

Piett saluted and left.

Vader continued to move down the hall. The force was calling to him, begging me to listen, telling him his son was near, and also something about his daughter. He ignored the call of the force, unsure if using it would harm Padmé. His wife had reluctantly agreed to let him talk to his children first.

"I'll escort the princess myself," he announced. He was sure that Padmé would want me to release the cuffs from her wrists but he had a healthy respect for Princess Leia's resourcefulness and while that respect was now tinged with pride, Vader did not wish to be vulnerable to her plans.

As he walked down the corridor, trying to figure out what to say, wondering if I should just wait for Padmé, Vader felt the strong presence of his son. Leia immediately called out "It's a trap."

Vader turned and faced his boy. "Yes, it was a trap. But if we are to confront one another I prefer to do it with words."

Clearly that was not what Luke expected. "I am not afraid of you."

"Do not underestimate the power of the dark side," Vader growled automatically. "But, I do not want your fear," he added. Vader should have been afraid and perhaps he still was but

mostly Anakin felt exhilaration. His plan was working. Padmé would see that he could be reasonable.

“What do you want?” Luke queried. “To kill me as you killed my father?”

Anger burned again. “Who told you that?”

“It’s true isn’t it? You killed my father as you killed the other Jedi.”

“I killed many Jedi, but I didn’t kill your father. Luke, I am your father.”

The princess gasped.

The princess, Vader still could not quite fathom that the haughty rebel leader was his missing child, and Luke stared at him in disbelief.

“Don’t listen to him, Luke. This is still part of the trap.”

Vader snorted. “You are so stubborn, princess. Reach out to the force and you may sense the truth.”

“I am not a Jedi.”

“But you have the choice to use your powers. The force runs strong in our family.”

Both Luke and Leia started at this unexpected revelation.

“I don’t believe you.”

“How can you deny the truth?”

Luke was backing away from Vader. “You’re a Sith.”

“Is that all you care about? We are a family.”

Luke had been relatively calm up until now. Suddenly however, he too gave reign to the Skywalker temper. “Why do you care? Where were you all these years? Why didn’t you acknowledge us? Why didn’t you... Leia and I kissed.”

Leia turned bright red at this.

“You what?” Darth Vader bellowed. “This is all Obi-Wan’s fault.”

“How is it Obi-Wan’s fault that you abandoned us?”

“I didn’t know you were alive!” Darth Vader boomed. “I thought I had killed you on Mustafar along with your mother.”

Both Luke and Leia stiffened. Darth Vader cursed at the stupidity he had uttered.

“I had a father,” Leia bit out. ‘Bail Organa. He was not a murderer.’ She raised her hands, the binders obvious. “May we leave now?” she asked knowing he would not let them go.

Why was Padmé always right? Before he stalked off, he raised a comlink. “Piett, arrange an escort for our two guests. There is someone I want them to meet.”

...

“Do you think he means to take us to the Emperor?”

“Who else?”

“And the other stuff he said?”

“You can’t believe him. It’s all part of some twisted evil plot.”

A.N. Thanks so much for reviewing. Your reviews make my day. Vader will get out of the suit... eventually. I like happy endings too much. But in the meantime....

## Chapter 4

---

This is just a tiny little update.

His mask hid his expression. He still walked like a conqueror. Somehow, though Padmé knew that in this confrontation with their children, he had lost.

“I should have gone after Obi-Wan on the Death Star,” Vader raged. “I should have sliced him down like the rancor he is.”

“Anakin, stop pacing and talk to me.”

“I thought he liked her. I was upset on his behalf that the smuggler and the princess were so close. I relished making the smuggler pay for interfering. Padme, Obi-Wan told them nothing.”

“Ani! They didn’t...”

“They kissed. Luke told me they kissed.”

Padmé breathed a huge sigh of relief. “Awkward, distressing, but not the worst that could have happened.”

“She hates me. He is furious with me. How are we to join together and combine our power to take over this galaxy if they will not listen? A lightsaber at their throat...”

Padmé interrupted him, “you are beginning to sound like the ranting maniac who tried to strangle me.”

Vader stopped. “Padmé?”

“Listen to yourself, Ani. Every other word is about power.”

“I thought you understood. I thought you agreed...”

“I do understand when you talk of deposing the man who destroyed a galaxy to gain a throne. But Ani, Sith or Jedi, good or evil, I will not stand by while you harm our children all the while raving about power.”

Vader sank down on a chair. “Everything is turning into poodoo. When I was the hero with no fear I could turn a losing plan into a success with my lightsaber and the knowledge that I had to win. As a Sith I learned the power of the Dark Side but always, full power was beyond is beyond my reach. I only want a safe world where we can be together, all of us. And it all seems to be slipping through my fingers while they gain victory after victory. And I should be proud that it is our children who oppose me so successfully, who are Palpatine’s greatest threats. But they hate me Padmé. I don’t want them to hate me.”

She reached out to him. As always, her touch calmed him. “They will learn to see you as I see you.”

“And how do you see me, Padmé?”



"A man who has done terrible things but still has good in him."

"What if that is not enough?"

"It will be enough. It must be enough. Otherwise, why would I be here?"

....

"Some Jedi knight I turned out to be."

"We're both locked up." Leia rested a hand on Luke's shoulder. "Do you think I'm proud of being his prisoner for the second time?"

"I didn't even draw my lightsaber. I let the guards take it."

"You didn't really want to fight Darth Vader? Han..." Leia's voice cracked, "Han drew a blaster on him and Vader deflected every shot easily. We'll bring that monster down — just not with the same tricks he's expecting."

"And we'll get Han back, Leia. I promise."

She smiled at him, "I know we will."

"Even if it's not true, Leia. And I hope..."

"I know what you mean, Luke. He had to have been lying. But I couldn't love a brother more than I do you."

....

"And you're leaving your lightsaber behind."

"You can't be serious."

"Why would you need a lightsaber to talk to our children? Are you planning to use it?"

"No. Of course not."

"Then leave it here."

Vader sighed and removed his weapon. "Next you'll want me to give Luke his lightsaber back."

"A gesture of good faith. Like not locking your children up in a cell or putting binders on them."

He picked up the cylindrical shaft the guards had brought to him. "Why don't I just stand there and let him swing at me and..." He stopped and looked at the weapon in his hands, "this is my old lightsaber."

"Ani?"

"Obi-Wan must have taken it from Mustafar and given it to Luke."

"Ani, are you ready?"

"Yes." Luke had carried his old lightsaber. Luke wanted a family, too. "I'm ready."

Vader walked down the corridor with renewed purpose. Beside him, Padmé reviewed her plans. She would talk to them. Her children. Hopefully they would be able to sense her. Ani, thought that Leia at least might. He thought Leia would be the difficult one. This was her fault. She should have been there from the first. What she would say to Luke and Leia? What words would overcome their reservations?

Padmé would not have a chance to try out diplomacy that day. After Piett had deposited Vader's guests into a guarded suite, Lando Calrissian and Chewbacca along with R2D2 and a newly repaired C3PO broke their comrades out.

She noticed the troopers and other military personnel agitatedly rushing after an exiting spaceship. She caught up to her husband just as he pushed past an Admiral Piett, stunned at still being allowed to live. Not only had he been unable to prevent the Millenium Falcon's departure, but he had been the bearer of Fett's terse refusal to return Solo.

"Anakin, were they on that ship?"

"Yes. Our children and their resourceful friends have slipped through my grasp yet again."

He didn't sound angry. Although it was difficult to tell, Padmé suspected that underneath the mask, her husband was laughing.

"They're certainly our children, Padmé." Vader sighed.

"Aren't we going after them?"

"We'll find them. They will be searching for the smuggler."

A.N. Thanks to everyone who has reviewed. Your comments make me so happy. I hope you enjoy this section.

## Chapter 5

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Just another quick update while I sort through plot points.

He wished he could contact his children. That bond of blood, their mutual training in the force, might let him speak to Luke. He hated not using the force. He was felt robbed of everything he had tried to be, less of a man than the wreck Palpatine drew from the burning ground of Mustafar. Anakin glanced at Padmé, sleeping on the bunk, looking pale and unmoving like the holo from her funeral procession. He would not, could not do anything to put Padmé in jeopardy. He would find another way....

"We could compare our medical records."

"Why are you still harping on this, Luke. Vader lied."

"He told me to search my feelings. Leia, what do your feelings tell you?"

"It's impossible Luke."

"What if he's telling the truth?"

"He's not. I remember my mother, my real mother."

"You do? What was she like?"

"I have just the one memory. She seemed so beautiful and so very sad. But she would never have had a child with Darth Vader. Let it go, Luke."

"The force won't let me. It's like when I saw Han tortured on Bespin." Luke paused seeing the pain on Leia's face. He continued more gently but still emphatically, "Those visions were the truth and somehow, much as I don't want it to be true, the force is telling me that we're connected, all of us."

"It doesn't change anything." We still have to find Han. We still have to fight the Emperor and..."

"Say it. You think we have to kill Vader, too. What if we can save him?"

...

He kissed her and she closed her eyes.

He drew back.

Padmé's lashes fluttered open, "Anakin, what's wrong?"

"Do you hate seeing me like this so much?"

"Yes."

He removed his arms from about her waist. "You can get up now."

She twined her arms around his neck once more and kissed his pale, scarred cheek. "I love you in spite of what you've done and what you look like. But being with you like this is torture. I want to be with my husband, to be able to lie next to him, to be able to continue this the way we used to, and I don't understand why you haven't..."

"Stop bringing that up. It's not an option right now."

"So this is all we have? I could accept that if there were no medical way, but there have been so many technological advances. One of them... Ani, I love you and I want to be with you. Why are you keeping these barriers between us?"

"It's just for a little longer. We'll find Luke and Leia. We'll—"

She stood up then. "There will always be a reason to delay, Ani. I thought you wanted me. Maybe, that was just the man you used to be."

...

Nothing. Months of playing word games with Palpatine and nothing. He had flown to Vjun and back to access the library at his private retreat. He had made plan after plan for breaking into Palpatine's secret hoard and stealing the old Sith Lord's holocrons. He had searched for artifacts from the Jedi library. And while Palpatine's cache remained elusive, none of the avenues he could search answered his questions or calmed his fears.

Although Padmé had returned eventually, their argument increased his growing frustration. Of course he wanted to be with his wife. Their time together marked the happiest moments of his existence. He loved her and a great portion of that love was a desire to be together physically. But they had no time. He couldn't wait while doctors tried to repair him, if they could. How long would he have Padmé with him? How long could she exist, if exist it could be called, in her strange state? The answers must be in the force. Bound as she seemed to be with his use of the force, could he use it to bind her to him forever?

And as for the rest of his family, they, too, remained beyond his control. For a time, he had thought he might buy Luke from his temporary captors. However, his son had escaped again. Then, he had learned definitively of the threat Xixor posed to not only Luke, but also to Leia. Xixor was no longer an issue. Palpatine might curse at no longer being able to divert himself pitting apprentice and crime lord against each other, but Vader would allow no one to threaten his children.

Jix had mentioned Solo was at last hanging in Jabba's palace. It seemed he would be forced back to Tatooine. Why was the universe determined to send him back to that forsaken ball of sand time and again?

...

"I wish we could contact General Kenobi."

"Don't you trust me?"

"Of course I do, Luke."

"Good. I want to talk to him, too."

"About Vader. I know." She stood up. "Well, then, I'll see you in a few days. And if not..."

“I’ll come and get you.”

“Right.”

...

He arrived at Jabba’s palace only to be told everyone of importance was out on Jabba’s sail barge taking the prisoners to the Saarlaac. He jumped into a skyhopper, Padmé quickly settling her petite form in the seat next to his, and together they raced across the sands. As he drove, he couldn’t help flashing back to another time he raced to rescue one he loved. He had failed his mother. That day he had broken his own moral code and been glad. Padmé had comforted him. He looked at the two lightsaber hilts hanging from his belt. His world had tilted and now he, like General Grievous, was the armored amalgamation of machine and being wreaking havoc. Only he had never stood for chaos — even when rebelling against the typical Jedi way. He had never tried to destroy purely for destruction’s sake.

...

He saw his daughter dressed in a bit of metal and fabric chained to that repellent green mass. He had thought nothing could increase his hatred for sleemos like Jabba. Apparently the force was determined to prove him wrong yet again. Vader vowed that Jabba’s life would be measured in minutes — no in seconds.

And then he was distracted, the force telling him Luke was in more immediate danger. He turned scanning the crowd.

Vader sensed the Emperor’s Hand moments before she was about to shoot. He tensed at further proof of Palpatine’s treachery. First the evil old man had told Xixor about Luke, leaving his son vulnerable to the crime lord’s plots. Now, he had sent his Hand to murder his child.

Vader was used to thinking fast. Padmé however was faster. His wife leaped behind the red-haired dancer and threw the girl off-balance. The assassin twisted back ready to deal with this interruption in her usual deadly manner. Padmé, however, floored Mara Jade with a punch to the chin. Good. Padmé was unharmed, Mara Jade was out cold, and was that R2D2 who had given his son a lightsaber?

Vader turned his attention back to Leia. In the interim, she had wrapped her chains about Jabba’s neck and was strangling her captor. Vader stealthily made his way to her and using his lightsaber severed the chain from her neck before gutting the nearly dead creature.

She whirled around and nearly fell back into Jabba’s bloated corpse. “What are you doing here?”

....

A.N. Thank you everyone who has read, reviewed, or put this story on your alerts. I really appreciate it.

## Chapter 6

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Although Han never wanted to be told the odds, he did like to know the score. Before he joined the rebellion he had seen some strange things, but nothing, which ultimately didn't blend in with his admittedly cynical worldview.

And now his world had turned topsy-turvy, looping faster than the x-wing pilots in the simulator. He had felt off-kilter for months, drawn to the petite spit-fire who rubbed him the wrong way and made him dream of being rubbed in a completely different manner. Sure, Leia had said she loved him as he was being lowered into the carbonite but he could easily chalk that up to the moment. Some girls were wooed with mood lighting and Corellian whiskey; others had their hearts melted by watching a handsome rogue face death. He had cherished her avowal though he had treated it lightly. But she had come to rescue him — they all had — and Han wasn't sure yet how to deal with having friends who would do so much, risk so much for him. He had been blind and not just from the Carbon Sickness.

Here on Tatooine, he was grateful no one had offered him a bet on the likelihood of this particular situation ever occurring. Tatooine was a big beige blur and in many respects it always had been. That should have reassured Han. It was not even the deep, slightly mechanized, bass of the man who had tortured him that made Han doubt the universe — he was used to the split second change from safety to peril, had made a living turning those moments to his advantage. He would never say it aloud, but he felt like Goldenrod with a malfunctioning circuit for how else could he explain the bizarre conversation between Darth Vader and Leia. Had Vader truly come here to help? Part of Han wanted to take off Vader's mask to check if one of Luke's friends was impersonating the Sith lord.

Darth Vader's intentions were the least strange in the list of unexpected, unprecedented, and seemingly unexplainable phenomena troubling Han. Leia seemed to be talking to someone he couldn't see — truly couldn't see. There was nothing he could do but wait, listen, and hope that when the world shifted again, he would be able to help his friends instead of standing by helpless.

It had been a long time since Anakin Skywalker found himself surrounded by a superior force — not since he had last called himself Anakin Skywalker. And yet, here he was, on the giant dustball, a prisoner of his children and their rascalion friends. The Dark Lord of the Sith stood straight and tall and imposing, thankful that at least the cooling systems in his suit still functioned. Black was not the ideal color for Tatooine — a fact his son, also dressed in black, should know.

"This is ridiculous," Mara Jade muttered.

"I warn you, Hand," he growled, "one telepathic communication to your master and..."

"Don't you mean our master? I knew you were a traitor."

"Palpatine is the traitor — to the very ideals of the republic he vowed to protect," Padmé insisted refusing to back down from the assassin's glare.

Vader watched as his wife continued to argue, drawing the attention of their captors from the other end of the skiff.

"If you believe that the Emperor is an abomination than why are you with that man?"

"There's a simple answer to your questions."

"A simple answer which you have not yet provided," Leia reminded.

Han turned to Chewie and muttered to Lando, "My eyesight must be getting worse because I still don't see who she's talking to."

"You're not the only one," Lando commented under his breath.

Chewie roared.

"What do you mean it must be some sort of force thing? Leia doesn't play Jedi and she's..." he paused.

The sound of Leia's strident voice filled the silence. "So once again Lord Vader, I have to ask what you were doing here, who your associates are, and"

"Offering help," Vader said, interrupting his daughter.

"It wasn't needed," she bit back.

"I can see that, princess." It felt funny calling her princess, knowing she wasn't Organa's child but his. Still, Vader felt as if using Leia's name was presuming too much. The girl radiated anger. If he were trying to recruit a Sith apprentice... not that he was...

"And your companions?"

Vader turned to Mara Jade. "She's an imperial agent. Mara Jade works directly for the Emperor."

"Oh you mean exactly like you, then." Leia retorted in her usually sarcastic manner.

The red-head bristled. "I am not at all like the treasonous Lord Vader and when my master finds out that Vader tried to save you..."

"He'll pass out from the shock. Or from laughing himself silly," Han quipped. "Not that I believe any of this, mind you."

"No one asked your opinion, Solo." Vader's voice boomed.

Naturally, Padmé took that moment to glare at him. "Oh for force's sake," Vader grumbled.

"Maybe it would be easier if I started from the beginning," Padmé offered. "About thirty-six years ago my home planet was invaded..."

"Great. Is this going to be a long history lesson?"

"Hand, I have a long memory."

"Am I supposed to be frightened now?"

"Yes."

“As I was saying,” Padmé continued, “Naboo was invaded and”

“I don’t know what game you’re playing, Vader, but after I kill Skywalker over there, I will be more than happy to”

“If you harm one hair of my son’s head,” Padmé warned.

Luke was staring at Padmé, drinking in the way she looked. He turned to Leia. “My mother? But... I thought...”

“Luke, Leia, I thought I could find a nice, simple way to tell you but...” Padmé’s voice trailed off at the anger in Leia’s expression.

“More lies,” Leia raged at Darth Vader. “What fantasy have you cooked up for us now? It was not enough to tell us you were our father, but now this absurdity.”

Han sputtered, “Did I just hear Leia say that... no...”

Chewie roared.

“What do you mean you’ve always known?”

Mara Jade turned to Vader in shock. “If your son destroyed the Death Star. That means you are...”

“What?” hissed Vader.

“Anakin Skywalker. No wonder you were looking up information about the farmboy.”

Vader rose to his impressive height and picked Mara Jade up by the throat. “You told the emperor about my son.”

“Father, put her down.”

Perhaps it was the shock of hearing Luke refer to him in such a way, but Vader dropped the girl.

The girl immediately pulled a blaster on him.

As was his wont, and forgetting his past few months of restraint, Vader used the force to send the blaster out of her grasp. Mara grabbed a vibroblade from her boot and was about to throw it when she stopped at the sound of Leia’s laughter.

“Just how many weapons do you have stored in that costume, anyway?”

Lando smirked as the red-headed assassin glared. Luke blushed, giving away his own preoccupation with Mara Jade’s costume.

Han blinked. Had she been there all this time, the dark haired woman standing next to Vader? She was petite, small like Leia, and with that same sort of aura around her, as if she were used to command. Only, this woman looked as if she wanted to cry. Han swayed. It was probably just the heat from this cursed planet.

It wasn’t ideal. Leia wanted nothing more than to borrow Luke’s new lightsaber and.... She took a deep breath to calm herself. She had to be in control, rational. Luke seemed so excited at having a family, any family. He claimed the force was telling him to listen but Leia



distrusted having her fate controlled by feelings. She had suggested that they take everyone to Obi-Wan's old home. Really, they should race off planet taking the prisoners to the rebellion before gossip from any survivors compromised their position. But Han looked exhausted and Leia was already furious that their reunion had been spoiled by these preposterous allegations. She needed to talk to him.

---

At first Luke only had eyes for the woman standing by Darth Vader. He couldn't help but watch as his father helped his mother regain her balance as they walked up to where Obi-Wan lived for 19 years on the edge of the Jundland Wastes. There was something so right about the way she accepted his arm.

He heard the girl, Mara, cursing behind him. He looked back. Maybe he should help her. If Vader could change, well, the rebellion always needed more recruits...

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Mara sulked as Vader's son approached her. "You grew up here?"

"Well not exactly here," Luke paused. When he continued there was a catch in his throat, "Uncle Owen and Aunt Beru had a moisture farm on the other side of..." When he broke off he found that Mara wasn't the only one listening to him.

"Just because you're a farmboy won't prevent me from killing you," Mara warned, uncomfortable with the vulnerable emotions pouring from Vader's spawn.

"You killed the only family he knew," Leia hissed at Vader whom she still considered a prisoner of the Rebel Alliance.

"Ani, not your brother!" Padmé exclaimed, turning in his arms and tilting her head back as if she could see behind the mask.

"Stepbrother," Vader spit out. "and I didn't think of them specifically. Why should I have?"

"Ani, you can't simply divide the universe into people you care for and those you can ignore. They were so kind to us."

"They couldn't take care of Mom so why should I have.."

"Sometimes, I wonder if you learn anything. Where is the boy who offered me help?"

"Padmé, I will try to do anything you command but..."

"Command? Am I the Emperor?" Padmé scoffed.

"Well now we know who's in charge in your family," Han quipped before he could stop himself.

"They are not my family!" Leia exclaimed.

It was at that moment that Padmé crumpled. Vader caught her in his arms before she could fall.

“What’s wrong with her?” Leia asked, terrified. It was crazy of course, but she felt as if the woman’s collapse was her fault.

“I don’t know” Vader choked. “I have done — everything I have done has been — I don’t know.”

“We should go to Dagobah” Luke stated. “Yoda and Ben will know.”

Vader cradled Padmé in his arms. “I have no faith in Yoda.”

“Because he is a Jedi?”

“Yes. He does not believe in attachments. He advised me to let go and that is something I have never willingly done — will never willingly do.”

Luke understood or thought he did. Yoda had discouraged him from rescuing his friends. Still he trusted the wise Jedi. “We must go to Dagobah,” he insisted.

A/N Thank you so much for all the lovely reviews. I’m sorry for the delay.

## Chapter 7

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A.N. I guess I've been watching too much Indiana Jones because I borrowed a bit. Thank you so much for the wonderful reviews. I really appreciate your sticking with my fic.

"So..." Leia's voice trailed off as she entered the cabin and viewed Han lying on the bed, shirtless. "How are you feeling?" she asked, finally.

"Awful," he responded. "Come kiss me better."

It was a wonderful offer from her scoundrel, but one she was a bit surprised he was making. "You don't care then?" she blurted out.

"I asked you to kiss me."

"You've asked lots of people to kiss you. I mean... Vader..."

"Come here," Han said, reaching out and pulling her to his side.

He could hear them — Solo and his daughter in the other cabin. Why in seven hells should have to listen to that arrogant smuggler seduce his child? He looked at Padmé, lying on the bunk pale and unmoving like the way she looked in the holovid of her funeral procession, and he knew he wouldn't interrupt his daughter's tryst. If she truly loved Solo... her feelings might not say anything wonderful about her judgment, but he wouldn't wish her more pain.

The door to the cabin slid open and Luke entered. The boy turned red as he recognized the sounds permeating the wall, then looked at Vader. "We're only a few clicks away now."

Luke sat on the floor beside his father's chair. Maybe it was nerves, actually choosing to be in a room with his father, the Sith lord because he suddenly blurted, "This is what I wanted — all my life — all I wanted was a family. Well, that and to leave Tatooine."

"We have that in common. The day I learned Padmé was pregnant was the happiest day of my life. I thought nothing could be better than her confessing her love for me, then making her my wife — even if it was a secret. But we were at war and she was constantly in danger. And then I came back to Coruscant and she met me and told me and... It just seemed like finally we would concentrate on the most important things — our love and our future together..."

"And now you can have that."

Vader laughed bitterly and loudly. From the other side of the cabin there was a curse and then silence.

"The universe has taken from me all my life. I should be grateful for the miracle that has reunited us but... I don't think I can bear losing her again."

The door slid open again and a flushed Leia entered. "We should be at Dagobah in a few clicks."

Vader nodded his head.

“She’ll be fine. Yoda will know...”

He turned towards his son. “I wish I had your faith.”

“Master Yoda would say that is why we fail. So you must believe, Father.”

“Do you think that’s why she...” Leia whispered in a voice filled with anguish. “I denied her. Maybe it’s my fault. I feel...”

She waited for Luke or Vader to deny the feeling she had had ever since Padmé had crumpled on Tatooine.

“Is the force telling you that?” Luke asked.

Vader watched as Leia’s expression grew even darker. “I have no answers, Leia. But this has happened before so you should not blame yourself.”

She looked up at him slowly, then nodded.

“Why did you deny her, Leia. Doesn’t she look the way you remembered?”

“You remembered her?” Vader asked.

Leia’s eyes were bright with unshed tears. “I just didn’t want to believe. All those years I...” she broke off. “Excuse me.”

Han cornered her in the galley. “I’m sorry about earlier.”

“I thought you didn’t mind about Vader.”

“I don’t. Doesn’t mean I want him listening.”

“Or Luke,” Leia muttered.

“Next time we’ll make sure we’re in a cabin far, far away.”

“Who said there will even be a next time, nerfherder?”

Han just smirked. “You can’t get rid of me that easily, Your Worshipfulness.”

Back in his cabin, Luke sighed feeling unaccountably restless. He kept thinking of flame-red hair and emerald green eyes. Maybe he should ask Lando if he and Chewie had found the assassin yet? She was just one more threat to worry about, having escaped in the confusion while they all huddled about his mother on Tatooine.

## Chapter 8

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It was Luke who first expressed what his sister and father sensed. “Obi-Wan is here,” he commented excitedly before he remembered that Obi-Wan had not told him the truth.

Vader, striding down the gangplank of *The Millenium Falcon* was aware of the urge to challenge his former master and gain revenge. Over twenty years and he still dreamed of the burning agony of flames consuming him. Every time he moved, breathed, viewed the world in a red haze, his hatred burned anew. Later, he promised himself. Later he would have his reckoning. First he must face Yoda. Fortunately, this was one fear he could master. Yoda would not harm his children and if the ancient being chose to confront Vader for the sins of the past, Vader was willing to fight. Anything, he would do or agree to anything as long as the Jedi Master did his best to try and help Padmé.

“You lived here, kid?” Han asked as his boots squashed in the swamp muck.”

“Sense visitors I did”

Obi-Wan was shocked. His first incredulous thought when he saw Luke and Leia with the dark masked hulk of his former padawan was that once again Skywalkers had turned to the Dark Side. Then he recognized Padmé, being carried in Vader’s arms.

“What Dark side abomination is this?”

Vader’s arms tightened protectively around Padmé.

In the same moment, Leia diplomatically addressed the jedi. “Master Yoda, Master Kenobi, she collapsed on Tatooine. She needs your help.”

“What help give can I to a woman dead? Saw least breath did Obi-wan on Polis Massa.”

“But she’s not dead, Master Yoda. Not now.”

“Explain,” Yoda demanded of Vader.

“I have no explanation. She first appeared glowing inside a Death Star interrogation cell.” He turned to Leia as if to gain her confirmation.

“You never said,” Luke interrupted.

“I didn’t believe... I thought.... The drugs...”

“Needed help did you. Provided help the force did. Qui-Gon’s ghost this hinted once. This see I now.”

Vader and Obi-Wan seemed startled by the mention of Qui-Gon. Before either of them could ask, Leia broke down. “It is my fault,” Leia sobbed. “I denied the truth, refused to accept her as my mother.”

“I thought she was tied to my use of the force,” Vader added.

“Both right are you,” Yoda determined. “Wife and mother and friend; she is attached to all. All must strength lend to help.”

“You can help?” Vader questioned worried he had heard wrong.

“That is why you came, Skywalker.”

## Chapter 9

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A/N It's been a while. Sorry. I got the idea for Padmé's being brought back when I read one of the EU books.

"This is a rather curious case," Obi-Wan commented, stroking his beard.

"Damn it, old man," Vader boomed, "Padmé is not some sort of experiment."

"Father, I'm sure General Kenobi would never..."

"With all due respect, Leia, I have known General Kenobi for far longer than you and I can tell you..."

"Question motives do not. Fallen to the dark side he has not."

"Is that your answer to everything?"

"Your answer to everything it was."

"Are you going to help her or not?"

"Let her go you must."

"I will not let this be a replay of twenty years ago. I didn't need to be told to give up then and I certainly will not..."

"Expect me to climb and see from shoulders you do?"

It was impossible to see Vader's expression but all the force users could sense his embarrassment, relief, and irritation at the misunderstanding. Displaying a tenderness at odds with his intimidating presence, he slowly lowered Padmé to the ground, careful to spread out the edges of the blanket he had wrapped her in.

"That little... he riled him on purpose, didn't he?" Han muttered.

"Yoda's lessons can be..."

"Crueler than a Hutt with a hangover."

"Children, we need you," Obi-Wan called from his position opposite Vader.

Slowly, the force users formed a circle around Padmé's inert body. Yoda grasped Obi-Wan's hand in his, motioning for the others to do the same. Luke threaded the fingers of his right hand through his father's black gloved ones while reaching for Obi-Wan's hand with his left. Leia, after a moment's hesitation, mimicked her brother's actions, grasping both Yoda's hand and that of her father's.

"What do I do?" Leia asked.

"On her place in the force, concentrate you must. Surrounds you the force does."

Vader felt the force flowing about him, through him, reaching from him to his children, to his old mentors, and to his beloved wife lying on the ground in front of him. He had never felt the force in this way — not since he had called himself Anakin Skywalker — and even then, he had felt barred from a true connection to the force because he had treasured his connections with his loved ones more. But now, though the old fear of losing Padmé still beat with every beat of his heart, Anakin felt calmed by the force surrounding him.

.....

Han watched as the jedi linked hands. Although he had told Leia he didn't care that she was Darth Vader's daughter — much, until today he had not really thought of the bright-eyed girl in terms of that hokey old religion. Hadn't enough separated them without her being able to tap in to these mysterious powers and abide by some mumbo jumbo rules — rules that apparently kept people from loving each other. And if he started siding with Darth Vader on love maybe the end of the world was approaching! Thankfully, Jabba was dead cause he always thought the end would include him puckering up to that bloated hutt. Naturally, that image brought thoughts of Leia saving him. Oh kriffing hell — here he was on some swamp planet putting his faith for Leia's happiness in some Force he never believed in — was that a snake slithering past his boot and would it hurt their concentration if he reached for his blaster?

....

Her eyes were closed, but she knew he was there — knew they were there.

"Mom, I'm so glad you're back. And I'm sorry. I'm so sorry."

"Oh, Leia." She opened her arms and for the first time since her child was born embraced her daughter. She looked up into the blue yes of her son and urged him "you too, Luke."

"Mom." With those words, Luke embraced his mother and sister.

"Thank you." Anakin murmured gratefully to the Force, to Yoda, to Padmé. He couldn't quite believe that she was sitting before him, cheeks flushed healthily.

It was too much. The dark cloaked lord of the sith left the circle, left Padmé to her reunion with their kids, and searched for some spot where he could be alone with his thoughts.

Obi-Wan watched his former apprentice stalk off.

"Unexpected this is," Yoda commented unnecessarily.

Obi-Wan looked at the former Grand Master of the Jedi order. He had no words to express the profound confusion and depression swamping him. Yes, he felt joy that Padmé was returned to life — Luke and Leia's happiness overwhelmed his unease at an experience, which directly contradicted all he had been taught as a jedi. Yet he had to think of the children's father not as Anakin but as Vader. If he didn't hold on to that thought he might give in to the attachment he had felt all those years ago for his brother. He might regret even more than he had that day on Mustafar his part in creating the black suited menace. Knowing he might be making a mistake, Obi-Wan trailed after the man who for over twenty years he had had to think of as Vader, as his greatest failure.

...



“Stop following me, old man.” His finger itched to ignite his lightsaber.

Obi-Wan listened to the controlled breathing of his former padawan, strained his ear for any hint underneath the mechanized coldness of the man he had seen earlier, clutching Padmé closely to that hard armored form. So much this day demanded a leap of faith. Perhaps it was time he risked changing the point of view he had been forced to live with for over twenty years.

“You can’t run away...”

“I am no longer a student Obi-Wan so you need not lecture me.” He might not be able to revenge himself on his old master, not now that the last two Jedi in the galaxy had helped bring his wife back, but if the Jedi dared mention anything about life and lightsabers...

Ah. The same testiness even if delivered in a completely new way. “Until you realize that opportunities for learning should never be ignored, you will always be the worst type of student.”

For a moment Vader’s rage sparked. He turned and Obi-Wan took a step back, finally seeing the bogeyman that had replaced Grievous, a menace so dark that old Clone War threats faded into obscurity. “Pray that I ignore you Obi-Wan.”

That really didn’t go at all the way he had wanted. Obi-Wan sighed. He would have to blame the unraveling of his plan for a talk on his old student. It was just like Anakin not to keep to his script.

...

Somehow, without entirely realizing it, Anakin found himself back by the *Millennium Falcon*. The smuggler was mostly hidden by the ship he idolized as he once again tinkered with the craft.

Naturally, his breathing gave away Anakin’s position. After a moment’s delay, Han crawled out from under the open hatch.

“Is the part where you decide you need to have a talk with me?” Han eyed the Sith Lord who had tortured him with his customary bravado. “I was about ready for a drink anyway.”

The smuggler already grated on his nerves — but watching the brash Corellian grab a glass of ale and quench his thirst forced Anakin to use calming techniques he had studied but rarely put into practice.

Han wasn’t especially comfortable with silence — not that Vader’s breathing could in any way be termed silent. In his usual way, Han blundered forth asking what only Vader’s Angel had dared to ask. “So now that Luke and Leia’s mom has done the whole return from the dead thing and before you settle down to play happy family, I just want to let you know that last interrogation session counted.”

“What?” Was Solo daring to...

Whether it was the alcohol, or simply Solo’s propensity for talking big, the captain pointed a finger at Leia’s father and continued, “I’m just saying you’ve already grilled me so I don’t intend to put up with the ol’ intentions speech. Cause we all know it’s your intentions that...”

“Anakin!”

“Father!”

“Han!”

As his wife and children called his name, Vader let go of Han, allowing the smuggler’s body to thump against the side of his ship.

“Hey, if that dents my ship —” Han threatened in the moment before Leia reached him.

“Anakin, what is going on?”

“Captain Solo and I were just not having a certain conversation.”

## Chapter 10

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A/N As an avid fanfic reader, I feel certain I have used concepts from other authors. I just have read so much I cannot remember exactly who. I know the idea that Anakin's status as a former slave impacted his romantic life as well as his interactions with the Jedi is a theme that numerous fanfic authors have picked up on.

"Father, Yoda is dying."

Instead of the recriminations he had expected, Luke had led him back to Yoda's home where the frail Jedi Master waited. Obi-Wan knelt by Yoda's bedside. Luke joined them. Padmé bent down to touch the Jedi Master's hand before quietly exiting. Feeling foolish, the giant in black armor laboriously bent his frame until he too formed a part of the tableau.

"Weak the light side is but grow stronger it must. A destiny is there Skywalker and you must..."

Yoda never finished his final injunction. The Jedi slowly faded, becoming one with the force. Obi-Wan bowed his head, then slowly rose and edged past father and son to leave the cramped abode. After a moment, Luke followed after him.

Alone by Yoda's bed, Anakin acknowledged his role in the Jedi's death. "I cannot be sorry even if your selfless actions to heal Padmé hastened her death." There was much he wanted to say — most of it rants against the Jedi who had both nurtured and oppressed him. Moreover, Yoda's last words caused him great uneasiness and he cursed the prophecy the Jedi still believed.

...

"Ben, what destiny was Yoda referring to?"

At this point Obi-Wan wasn't quite sure. "It's a long story, Luke."

"I'd like to hear it."

"At one point, your father was..." Obi-Wan poised remembering how Qui-Gon was so certain Anakin would bring balance to the force as the chosen one.

Luke interrupted the old Jedi's reverie "Actually, I would prefer it if you first explained about... you told me Vader killed my father. You lied to me."

"It was the truth, Luke. When Anakin became Vader he killed everything that was good in your father. It was the truth, from a certain point of view." He needed to remind himself of that. Especially with Vader a few feet behind him ready to assert his own version.

"You still expect truth from my old master. He once offered to surrender to a Separatist general purely as a delaying tactic. After all what does the truth matter to the Jedi. They just deny everything. They just hide your children away for years and train them to see you as the enemy, train them to destroy you. But of course revenge is not of the Jedi."

Obi-Wan stood up. "That is not the truth."

"It is from a certain point of view, old man. From my point of view."

"And you would do anything to warp your children the way you allowed Palpatine to warp you. Planning to turn Luke into a sith? Tried to turn his head with stories of power once you topple the Emperor? Only the dark side concerns itself with power."

"What about survival Obi-Wan? Did you foresee a life for my children after you sent them to kill me and the Emperor?"

"I'd like to know the answer to that, Master Kenobi." Padmé interjected. All three men turned to see the former Senator of Naboo standing coldly behind them.

"A Skywalker must bring balance to the force. We thought it would be Luke or perhaps..." Obi-Wan's voice faltered under Padmé's accusing stare.

"Or if my husband accidentally killed his son you then had one last hope. You would send his daughter. I told you there was still good in him."

"That's only the grimmest outline of..."

"I was dying. I trusted you. I trusted you even after you hid yourself away on my ship. I trusted you even after you fought Anakin — though if I had known... Obi-Wan how could you be so cold and unfeeling?"

"What else was there for us to do? Senator Organa and Mon Mothma continued the rebel alliance from the ideals you discussed in secret meetings. But more than a political battle, this has always been a conflict between Jedi and Sith. I would have gladly thrown my life away facing Sidious but even Yoda could not triumph. The Skywalkers have a destiny. If it is not for their father to bring balance to the Force than it must be Luke or Leia."

This was the moment he should make a stand. And yet, he was a coward. Yes, the Dark Lord of the Sith, the Hero with No Fear was a coward just as he had been all those years ago. Padmé was restored to life and for that he was grateful — more grateful than he felt comfortable acknowledging. And yet, even that which he had hardly dared to hope for was not enough. His children were in danger. They were idealists and nothing would keep them from seeking the thick of battle protesting the Empire's cruelty. Obi-Wan and his prophecy would compel them, would ensure that they take up roles from what looked like a tragedy worse than anything Palpatine had ever made him sit through at the opera. And he was still a physical wreck. In spite of his ability to wield the Force how could he protect them? They would not even make it easy for him to try. He knew that with every fiber of his being. He should interject. He should reaffirm his role as the Chosen One. That was one of the reasons he had sought Luke so urgently? Wasn't it? But wouldn't he merely be choosing to expand the target on his family?

"You never really wanted me to kill my father, Ben?"

"Of course not. A Jedi wants only peace."

## Chapter 11

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A/N Thank you everyone for the reviews. General-joseph-dickson, I agree with you that the Jedi would not allow the Sith to live. Still, I think Obi-Wan had his reasons for responding the way he did.

He believed Ben — of course he believed Ben and yet he knew that the old Jedi's words were only partly true. Ben and Yoda had planned for him to confront Vader and to kill him. He should have been shocked. And yet aside from wanting to have his family with him, how was Vader any less a monster than the rebellion had first stated? How was his father any less of a force to be reckoned with? This strange truce on Dagobah seemed a moment out of time — and even this truce couldn't stop his father from showing just how much of an antagonist he was whether to Han or to Ben. His mother clearly thought there was still good in his father. Luke agreed that there must be. And yet, did knowing that the Dark Lord of the Sith was committed to protecting his family do anything but complicate the political situation? Luke needed to talk to Leia about this and Leia had hurried Han to a private spot on the *Millennium Falcon*.

...

"You can't push me away, Ani."

"That's the last thing I want to do," he insisted turning to her.

"And yet you keep on moving from one spot to another giving reign to your temper and..."

"I just need to be alone for a bit. Why can't I find one spot on this cursed planet to be alone?"

"Anakin, if you think that's all you're going to say" she paused. "if I could I would slap you. Can't you see you're holding whatever it is that's bothering you to yourself and I'm worried I'm going to lose you again."

"Angel," he rasped. "You're back with me again. I thank the Force for that. And I want to be near you. I do. But I just can't right now. I can't tell you my thoughts or I will lose you."

"What could possibly be so horrible now?"

"Angel, I... I love you. You know that."

...

In the end it was Captain Solo who came for him. "We're leaving Dagobah to rendezvous with the Alliance. You are planning on coming, aren't you? I mean you're not going to stay here for the next twenty years?"

"There are many who would like that to be the case. She..."

"So you really ticked her off."

“Obviously. I am surprised Captain Solo that you have managed to grasp that.”

“Hey, you don’t need some wacky old mumbo jumbo to figure that out.”

If he weren’t in such a bad mood, he might promise to remind the smuggler of his words at some future date when the cocky pilot was sure to have irritated his extremely volatile daughter. At this moment however, the possibility of trading barbs with Solo only reminded him of his old verbal games of one-upmanship with Obi-Wan and considering how far his existence was from those days, well he preferred to remain uncharacteristically silent. Because even if some days he feels older than Palpatine, he is not old enough to play father to Han Solo, even if he suspects that some day he will be the insolent Corellian’s father-in-law.

Silence was not something Solo respected.

“So what was the argument about anyway?”

“A question.” Vader tried to infuse his response with as much of his usual intimidation techniques as possible when really there was little to be done other than give in and follow Solo back to the ship — eventually, anyway. Yoda’s shuttle was beyond even his repair skills having long been covered and eroded by the planet’s flora like a brick wall invaded by vines, the way the rebel alliance had slowly insinuated itself star system after star system. As to traveling with Obi-Wan... he was reluctant to use the sentiment over his dead body but really either way it expressed his intentions. “I am ready to return, Solo.” Even as he said those words, he knew they weren’t completely true.

....

Padmé stared at her husband in concern. She was not used to arguing with Anakin. Not really. Or maybe it was that she was too used to not hearing what he was really saying and he was too comfortable trying to say the charming things she preferred to hear. Maybe if she had really listened to him that day on Naboo when they had discussed politics... The problem was whether as Anakin or Vader, her husband trusted few people and the few he had trusted... She didn’t want to finish that thought. Didn’t want to acknowledge this new iteration of her beloved who seemed reluctant to fight and who seemed to be holding old grievances to him desperately — gripping ever more tightly as life gave him greater reasons to celebrate. More troubling still was his unwillingness to share his troubles with her. She loved Anakin. She always would. And yet, not for the first time, she wondered if their love was enough. She wouldn’t let herself doubt — not after this miracle of the Force that had brought her back.

....

Leia, as usual, was bent over a data pad planning. “I’ll send a message to Mon Mothma as soon as we are in range.”

“It will be interesting to see Mon again. We worked together quite often during the Clone Wars.”

“She’ll be first in line to order my execution for war crimes” Vader interjected. “Did she know, do you think? You and Mon Mothma and Bail Organa presented your petition together. Do you think she knew?”

Padmé hesitated.

“She must have known to remain silent for so long” Vader answered his own question. No Jedi mind trick could have silenced the questions about Luke. And she most likely recognized Leia as your daughter too, Padmé.”

Leia started at that conjecture. Perhaps she felt the undertones of anger in Vader’s statement. It seemed that if he was taking pleasure in being the former Chandrillan senator’s adversary if only because she knew his former self and had most likely helped to sever Vader’s children from any connection with their heritage.

“Must you make this all about you?” Leia objected. “The fate of innocent star systems lies in the balance and yet you persist in making this a conflict about family.”

“You were chained to Jabba in a so called innocent star system. Why should I care for the nameless more than my own blood. Palpatine used me. The Jedi used me.”

“You had choices,” Leia answered pitilessly. Whatever softness she had allowed herself to feel for Vader on their trip to Dagobah faded when she saw the black-clad, clack-hearted monster throwing Han against the ship’s walls.

...

Obi-Wan tried to meditate but his thoughts were more chaotic than he was accustomed to — all Anakin’s fault — well Vader’s fault really but Luke seemed so confident that Anakin was returning. He had answered Luke’s question by sidestepping the issue. He knew that if Vader didn’t change someone would have to kill the menacing Sith just as they would have to destroy Palpatine. But did he truly want that burden to be Luke’s? The hardest thing Obi-Wan had ever done was to fight Anakin, the young man he had seen as a brother, on Mustafar. How could he wish that same pain on Luke? Yet wishes and necessities were two different things — sometimes separated by a gulf as wide as the divide between Jedi and Sith. So once again Obi-Wan had spoken from a certain point of view and once again he felt uneasy at his omission.

## Chapter 12

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They arrived at the rendezvous and Leia, who had been pacing back and forth past the dejarrak table, bustled down the gangplank eager to talk with the rebel alliance's high command. In the end, she had not sent a message to Mon Mothma.

She turned to Vader. "I think you should stay on board with Threepio until Luke and I explain."

As usual, Vader's body language made Leia uncomfortably aware of the philosophical and political differences between herself and her biological father. Added to that, her growing awareness of the force provided her with unwanted hints of her father's less than placid emotional state. His turbulent emotions exacerbated her longing for calm. She met his intimidating stare with one of her own piercing glances and then left the *Millenium Falcon* with a brisk gait purposefully used to cover her anxieties.

Padmé turned to the husband who had transformed from an open eager youth into this closed off, hard-headed — well to be fair he was always hard-headed she reminded herself — but she knew she needed to talk before the silence grew worse.

She had waited too long. Using the force to casually open the ships' hatch, Darth Vader strode away from her. Two thoughts were uppermost in Padmé's mind. What had changed? And how could she prevent another disaster from destroying everything yet again?

...

Han Solo considered the unexpected his new normal. Even so he couldn't quite believe what he was seeing — Darth Vader about to make off with an X-Wing. "You're leaving?"

"They are about to arrest me. I will not give them the satisfaction."

"You're going to abandon your wife, your children—"

"I am going to find a position of strength and show these skeptics" he broke off "I am not and will not be a prisoner of this rebel alliance."

"Have you even told them?"

"Obi-Wan knows." Vader bit out. He refused to dwell on Obi-Wan's continuing doubt and the argument that should have ended in a lightsaber duel — hopefully more satisfying than their last on Mustafar — but instead was derailed by High Command's frantic communications for the old General.

"And you think that's all they need?"

"Of course not, Solo."

Han wanted to say something. It probably was for the best that Vader was leaving. He should detain him. There was always the possibility that by watching Leia's father leave, Han was acting as an accomplice. He refused to think about that. It made him slightly sick.



“Captain Solo”

Han was startled out of his thoughts by the menacing bass rumble.

“Keep them safe.”

“You didn’t have to ask. I’ve been covering their backs since before you even knew you were their father.”

“That wasn’t a request, Solo.”

....

Obi-Wan’s bent head gave Padmé all the information she needed.

“He left.”

“It was only to be expected. Years manipulating the force as a sith have only honed his need for power. It’s hard to face, but you’ve been fooling yourself.”

“That’s not true!”

It nearly broke her heart watching her son defend his father. But Padmé refused to let her heart shatter. She would trust in Anakin. And so apparently would her son.

“Ben, he’s changed. He must have a reason.”

“Luke, I want to believe you but even the faintest hope needs a better foundation than merely wishing.”

“Luke’s right.”

Padmé watched in awe as her daughter joined in the argument. “We’re the reason he changed. He won’t do anything to harm us.”

“Leia, the dark side doesn’t allow for such considerations. For all his talk about loving your mother, on Mustafar your father”

“That’s enough, Obi-Wan.” Padmé insisted. “We must deal with the here and now. I will continue to believe in Ani. Meantime, there is still much to be done.”

## Chapter 13

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A/N Sorry this is so short. Thanks for all the reviews.

Sorry for the mistake.

Vader didn't have much of a plan. Ideally he would comm Pielt, take control of the *Executor*, and round up the 501st. If the force were with him, he would be able to complete these goals without alerting Palpatine. If he were better at playing the political game he would bargain with Isard and the Moffs. He had always stayed away from the court — looked upon its intrigues with disgust. His few schemes had revolved around finding an apprentice and overthrowing Palpatine. He had not realized quite how alone he was until he found his family.

For the first time he truly wondered about the men he had commanded for so long. Would they come with him? Fight for him rather than the Emperor and in doing so break their vows? In spite of the vows he had forsworn, Vader had never truly considered himself a traitor. Hadn't the Jedi betrayed him first? Hadn't Palpatine lied and deceived him? He owed loyalty to know one but his wife and children. But this reasoning would not sway career military to change sides.

Long ago, in another lifetime, Cody and Rex and their clone brothers would have followed the Hero with no Fear anywhere. They had trusted him. Vader had relied on the Emperor for too long. With subordinates who lived in terror of his legendary temper — even if that temper had been held in check since Padmé's return — Vader wondered if it would be a better risk to send the fleet on a wild goose chase then to try to gain their backing.

A coded message. A secret mission. If he couldn't win them over — surely he could create some sort of misdirection. If he had stayed, someone in the Rebel Alliance might have fleshed out and improved his rough idea. This seemed just the sort of... Vader halted the unpleasant thought that he would be appropriating alliance tactics and might benefit from their help. He would do this.

If only Padmé and his children would remain safe. Somehow, he doubted Captain Solo's ability to safeguard them. On the few occasions when Padmé's desire to fight had not made her a target, she had still drawn danger to her. It seemed their children had inherited the same tendency to rush towards trouble. One arrogant captain could do little. They needed bodyguards.

Vader traded the x-wing for a less conspicuous flight choice at the first opportunity. Stopping at Honoghr was a risk — but he knew this was a necessity.

## Chapter 14

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“I come to free your people from their honorable service to the Emperor.”

He had had to take refuge in aggressive negotiations — not a great sign. How had Padmé managed all those years ago gaining the help of Boss Nass — overcoming years of distrust and discrimination with a heartfelt plea to unite against a greater threat? He had admired her so much — suddenly seeing the kind handmaiden as the great ruler who succeeded when even Jedi seemed at a loss.

Of course, it helped that Padmé had not actively hurt the people she was trying to negotiate with. These Noghri now were in service to Thrawn. Why had he passed on such a great tool to the Chiss?

And for all his youthful dreams of freeing slaves, he needed an army standing behind him, not a people truly exercising their freedom. He wanted to topple the emperor — but to destroy the empire itself seemed foolish and wasteful. Surely under the right leaders, under Padmé and his children, the empire would become the government he had dreamed — powerful, decisive, a force for justice in a world where the average citizen settled for corruption and inactivity.

He would not lie to the Noghri. Everyone his entire life had lied to him, lied to his family. Perhaps there truly was no return from the Dark side. He owed his family apologies but he would not grovel before a galaxy that had already demanded its share of his blood.

“Why should we trust one who actively talks of the destruction he has wrought?”

It was a good question. If Obi-Wan were here, the Negotiator might take refuge in his fabled half-truths. Vader would not lie to the Noghri. He had never believed in concealing his opinions. Unfortunately, this left him racing to escape an angry Noghri army. So much for his plan to provide the deadliest bodyguard for his family.

“It’s Father,” Luke said in answer to Leia’s inquiry. “I can feel something is wrong. He’s in trouble.”

“Luke...”

“I can sense it. It’s the same way I knew you and Han were in trouble in Cloud City.”

“Luke, we can’t... you can’t... the Alliance needs us here. He can take care of himself.”

“Do you truly sense your father is in danger?” Padmé questioned, her voice not quite managing to mask the dread.

Luke nodded slowly.

“Then we need to save him.”

“I’ll speak to the high command about a short personal mission while you tell Han to get the Falcon ready.”

Luke grabbed Leia's hands in his own. "I knew you'd do the right thing."

"I wish I were so certain of that. I feel as if I keep letting the mission down. Our cause..."

Padmé touched her daughter's shoulder. "I once thought as you did, changed my mind only when I was on the brink of disaster, and often wondered if I made the right choice. Ani always tried to put the people he loved before everything. I couldn't condone that. I don't think I shall ever truly be able to even though I am grateful for this second chance."

Leia nodded and looked as if she would interrupt. Instead, Padmé put a finger over her daughter's lips. "But I know that a cause by itself lacks heart. You can't simply fight for justice without knowing what justice means." Once your father had the most giving heart in the galaxy and he lit the sky not merely with his lightsaber but with his desire to change the world for the better. Don't feel you have to split yourself in two in order to do good. You fear to inherit anything from Vader but the need to separate your heart from your head is a mistake I made and would prefer for you not to repeat."

Tears welled in Leia's eyes. She couldn't verbally acknowledge her mother's words. It was too soon. Still, when she talked to Mothma she felt a weight lift from her heart.

Han grumbled but between him and Chewie, the *Millenium Falcon* and all its passengers managed to arrive on Honoghr. Unfortunately, Vader was long gone, leaving his rescuers at the mercy of a disgruntled and disillusioned species.

"We need to find father," Luke reminded his sister. "Han, how long before the *Falcon* can take off?"

"We can't leave yet." Leia stated firmly.

Han would have asked why, but several of the steel grey toothy creatures were stalking toward them.

"Have you ever dealt with the Noghri before?" Padmé asked.

Leia shook her head. She inclined her head slightly to the oncoming beings, prepared to do her diplomatic best. At her side, Threepio was babbling his usual anxieties while confirming he could speak the native dialect fluently.

In the end, Threepio was unnecessary. The first, Khabarakh strode up to her. His sharp senses immediately told him more than Leia would have revealed.

"You are the daughter the Vader." He turned his head, his gaze and other senses, taking in the rest of the party. "Why is the family of Vader hear to spread more lies and urge more destruction?"

Padmé turned toward the warrior. "We seek Vader. He was here, recently."

"Yes. But we will not fight for Vader. We will no longer fight for any man."

"He asked you to join the alliance?" Luke gasped.

Leia could tell from the Noghri's expression that that was not Vader's purpose. "He wanted a private army. Didn't he?"

"He asked for bodyguards."

“For him?” Han scoffed.

“For the members of his family, the wife and children of Vader in return he promised us truth.”

“The truth?” Padmé asked.

“That his droids were poisoning our planet to keep us in thrall to the emperor.”

Han whistled. No wonder Luke was half crazy if his old man was that insane.

Padmé paled. Every time she learned more about her husband’s crimes against humanity she wondered how to secure the future with him she still wanted. Would they have to rule the empire simply to keep him safe from his victims? Would she turn into a tyrant to protect him from the justice he deserved?

“Whether he is Anakin or Vader, he has never...” her voice trailed off. No matter how he hated half-truths and deception, the emperor’s henchman had clearly embraced those ruthless techniques if they aided his goals.

Leia took up the diplomatic banner. “While we would value your skills and your honor, it is as members of the Alliance, fighting against Palpatine, that we plead for your help. It is as members of the Alliance that we also promise aid. You deserve freedom from the empire and from the environmental catastrophe my father has perpetuated. We promise you to do all we can to create a solution. We offer this whether you choose to fight or not.”

“We must discuss this with the Maitrakh,” Khabarakh finally answered. “Come. Return with us to the dukha.”

“That was definitely not a request,” Han muttered. Chewie’s answering growl confirmed the pilot’s opinion a moment later.

## Chapter 15

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Author's Note: So I wrote myself in a corner and I apologize for the delay. Hopefully, I can take up the threads of this rambling wish fulfillment and give Anakin and his family some happiness... eventually.

He dreamed of her.

"Anakin, please come back to me," she cried as he had rarely seen her cry.

Night after the night the force spoke to him. And he feared, that like all his other dreams, this too would prove true. This was more than him temporarily leaving in a vain quest to get protection for his family. Padmé was grieving.

So the force was telling him that he would soon die. He would be separated from his family yet again. Part of him wanted to fight the force. After all, why should he allow these visions to rule his life? Why should he accept death?

But the force wasn't calling for Padmé's death. It wasn't menacing the lives of Luke or Leia. This time, the vision promised his own death.

The man clung with one hand, holding on to life with his charred and mutilated body, persevering even when the people who mattered were torn from him, even when he had shattered everything he cared about with his fear, now dreamed of his end.

He wasn't afraid of his death. He wanted to spend time with his family, now that he had found them again. But really, he could accept death this time — as long as his family remained safe.

No he didn't want Padmé to cry, hated to break her heart again. But perhaps, if he could destroy Sidious, if he could make his death count, then the tears he caused his beloved would be not worth it, never worth it, but better than the tears he had caused two decades ago.

And really wasn't death all that was left for his failing body and sordid past? In the bright new world his daughter hoped to create, no one would accept him or leave him be. And how could he condemn Padmé to live with fear? How could he force her to abandon everything for him. Yes, she was willing to give up nearly everything for love. But he had spent too long transformed into someone else. He could never undo the atrocities. He could never unlearn his belief in a more efficient government even if that meant dangerous compromises of principle. So there would be no real place for him in that new world. Not if he wanted his family to be part of that growth.

He was Darth Vader. He was the Chosen One. He was Anakin Skywalker. If the force demanded this, perhaps it was the price for Padmé's return. And really, wasn't it better that the children have a mother they could be proud of, then a father the world loathed? Perhaps it was time for him to complete the force's mission. And really, he had wanted to kill Emperor Palpatine, his one time friend and cruel master, for quite some time.

## Chapter 16

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### Chapter 16

The Alliance was on the move. After the Bothans had confirmed the existence of a second Death Star and revealed the significance of Endor's forest moon, the rebels divided into volunteers for two dangerous missions.

But for the Skywalker family, the anxious bravado of a rebellion determined to destroy the Empire once and for all was tempered by worry. For the Bothans had brought even more disturbing news — that Darth Vader had been seen calling to Imperial troops, that he was heading back to the Imperial forces.

"He wouldn't," Luke protested. "It must be a trap."

"I would like to think so," Obi Wan agreed. 'But your father,' he paused still unable to quite reconcile his former padawan as a father, "Anakin is most likely... I would like to think he is..."

"He left. Perhaps he had the right idea when he sought out the Noghri but clearly the stresses of..."

"No, Leia. Did the man who fought to save our mother seem like he would abandon us for the emperor?"

"I don't mean that he is recommitting himself to evil, Luke. I just don't think the Bothans are wrong about their data."

"Leia is right, Luke. I think Anakin is a very disturbed man. His failure with the Noghri... Anakin never took failure well. He... perhaps he created his own mission."

"Yes, he is heading to destroy the emperor. He must be." Luke loyally insisted.

"Whatever his intentions, if Anakin is planning to face Sidious, he is endangering himself, the dark side is so very powerful and Anakin did not completely shake off..."

"Oh stuff it old man," Han interrupted. "I'm not Darth Daddy's biggest fan but he has been trying to make it up to you. If he went back to kill the emperor, then it's another dangerous mission. Maybe even one that requires Kenobi and Skywalker."

Obi Wan looked at Han Solo in shock. But Luke eagerly took up the call. "yes, we can go fight with Father."

"No. Solo is right, Luke. You and your sister and Solo need to disable the generator. It's time that I showed some faith in Anakin."

Luke beamed at Han and then at his mentor. "Thank you for understanding. Thank you." He turned to Leia. "We should say goodbye to mother before we leave."

Perhaps it was C3PO's innate sense of the dramatic that caused him to show up then, anxiously moaning, "Oh I am so sorry Master Luke but Mistress Padmé has gone."

## Chapter 17

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### Chapter 17

They had been prisoners before. As much as he hated to think about the Clone Wars, especially once he realized most of what he fought for was a lie, manufactured by Sidious — a lie he had planned to make truth when he destroyed his master and created a new, better, more effective government, battle after battle had served a harsh training ground. Most of his plans were risky and had depended on improvisation more than following a specific scheme, but there were plans.

He had never believed he was going to certain death. Somehow, even in those moments on Mustafar, he had always believed he would be going back to Padmé.

Not this time. Mara Jade would have informed his master. He would be a prisoner in truth — a prisoner who had felt freedom for too short a time.

He stalked into the room, lightsaber still at his side, trying not to think of the worlds outside the large window. There was the creature behind all the manipulation, the one who had orchestrated most of his and the world's pain for his personal power.

"You have forgotten something, Lord Vader."

The emperor's voice rasped menacingly and Anakin looked into that ruined face and tried to tamp down on his rage. "I am remembering everything."

"Then you should kneel as you were always meant to kneel," the old scarred and hooded being mocked.

"Don't speak to me of should." Anakin growled, a hint of irritation that could have been attributed to either his Jedi self or to his later Sith incarnation.

"Then what shall we speak of, my friend. Would you like to know of the doom facing your family? Your daughter watched as the first Death Star destroyed Alderaan. Now you shall watch as this very operational Battle Station annihilates everyone for whom you still care."

"No." Anakin didn't shout the word this time. He whispered it, or would have if his ruined voice and suit had let him. It couldn't be. His vision foresaw... The emperor was wrong.

"Such a disappointment, my friend. Failing as a Jedi, far too banal a Sith. You begged me once. Do you remember?"

Of course Anakin remembered. His despair over the Force visions. His terror that Padmé would die in childbirth. His hope that finally something would give him the power to overcome his fears.

"There is nothing you could offer me anymore."

"There is nothing I would have from you anymore, except your death — after I have crushed what is left of your charred heart."



Padmé would be safe. The children would be safe. The visions only showed his death. He repeated that to himself as he advanced closer to the old spider. But he remembered Yoda's mantra that the future was always in motion and wondered if that meant even this precious belief his family would be safe would be lost.

Palpatine could map the future, had mapped it for decades. He had years to follow the strings of fate, to uncover the will of a very fickle force and bend it to his own.

"Yes, my friend. Kneel. Kneel because there is nothing you can do and nothing I want from you other than this last submission. But first, I will let you have a little of what you wanted for years and could never quite manage. Revenge." With those words, the emperor lifted his hand and brought a girder down. And Obi-Wan, who had just crawled through the air ducts, came down with it.

## Chapter 18

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### Chapter 18

Padmé moved through the Death Star corridors, hoping no one would question her disguise. Impossible at her height to be a storm trooper, and with the empire's negative stance towards women or non-humanoids employed in the highest levels of the imperium, she had begged R2D2 for help. Cannibalizing parts from droids, he had made a comfortable, slightly larger scale, shell for her to hide in. Thus, pretending to be an extra droid, she had smuggled herself onto Obi Wan's ship, and tagged along as once again he chased after her husband.

It wasn't the smartest plan. But as the wheels of her conveyance rolled her through the corridors of this abhorrent battle station, she knew she had to try. More than try. She had to succeed.

Artoo had fitted her out with an array of stunners and lasers. She had her blaster clutched tightly in her hand in the event she needed to leave the disguise behind.

No one took much notice of a droid. Strange and unfair and oh how she would work to make C3PO and R2D2 and all the other good friends more accepted. There was so much in the galaxy they needed to fix. Would Anakin want to still want to free the slaves and fight for justice? Was it unfair to ask him?

She thought of the quick message she had left for her children, the psychological and emotional damage she was no doubt propagating by leaving them again. Not that she had meant to leave anyone by dying. But Leia had only just accepted her and even Luke had deep hurts from a childhood of secrets and refusals. They were her children but they were adults. They had managed so far to do what she had not — strengthening the rebellion she and Bail, oh poor Bail, and Mon Mothma had started.

It was cruel to leave and possibly stupid as well but Obi Wan would never have let her follow him. In a way, it served him right for sneaking aboard her ship to Mustafar. Only please let her be able to save Anakin this time.

"You shouldn't have come Obi Wan."

"Why not?" the older Jedi asked, one eye on Anakin and the other watching the emperor's unpleasant smile.

"Oh, what a cold greeting for Obi Wan. Has he come to welcome you back to the alliance? Let us think of the wonderful life in store for you — until those righteous traitors execute you for your hard work keeping the galaxy together."

"I wasn't sent by the alliance, Anakin."

"Even worse," tsked Palpatine his evil glee noisome. "Obi Wan is here once again on behalf of the jedi. Even if you forgive him for the pain you've lived in, can he ever truly forgive you? And why should you ask forgiveness for wanting to be strong? For wanting to be unafraid? For wanting to be heard?"

Obi Wan's heart sank. This was the emperor at his most dangerous, corrupting everything. "You must listen to me."

"Did you listen to him Obi Wan? I was his friend, too. And oh how you jedi misused him. You lost your little Ashoka with your inability to see the truth."

It was true. He knew this master of lies wielded the truth with precision. If only he could see Anakin's face. But he had created the creature in the mask and he had helped to sever the master-padawan bond.

Suddenly, rage filled Obi Wan. Anger he rarely experienced such as during the death of Qui-Gon or watching a holo of Anakin slaughtering the younglings. His light saber was in his hand. He had leaped to Sidious' seat. His green blade swung down.

Until it was blocked by the red blade of a sith's lightsaber.

"Anakin," Obi Wan thought in despair as he prepared to face Vader.

## Chapter 19

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### Chapter 19

But it was Anakin. He could sense it was Anakin, beneath the confusion and fear, it was still his brother.

It was Anakin who stopped Obi Wan, only to retract his own blade. “He hasn’t told the entire truth. You are the prize, Obi Wan. To him I am worthless, a slave he has already beaten. But if he can make you, the best of the Jedi, turn...”

Obi Wan looked at Sidious, only now realizing the extent of the danger. In spite of all he had assumed about dark and light sides of the force, of all he thought he knew about attachment and loss, still he had fallen.

“You can’t add this to the count,” he quipped in relief.

For a moment, Obi Wan felt that fearsome black mask staring at him, perplexed. Then he felt Anakin’s laughter through the force. For the first time, in a long time, Obi Wan truly felt hope.

Which is of course, the moment when everything changed for the worse.

“Brothers-in-arms once again?” cackled Palpatine. “Well then, you can both die together.”

**BREAK BREAK BREAK**

He was killing him. Although Palpatine had promised them a joint death, it was Obi Wan who bore the brunt of the deadly voltage. Anakin, who remembered the agony of thinking his mentor, his father in all but blood, dead, watched in horror as Obi Wan’s crumpled and screamed. For so long he had hated Obi-Wan. He had loathed the old man for a thousand slights, for leaving him burning, for not seeing his pain and trying to help him, and now... now he watched as Palpatine, who he had also hated for the past two decades, tried to destroy his old friend.

No! Palpatine must be stopped. Slowly, trying not to catch the emperor’s attention, and what further proof of the evil old man’s break with sanity than his sadistic glee at torturing the weary Jedi. Slowly Vader picked up Palpatine.

He gripped the old man tightly, refusing to let go even when through the pain of absorbing all that electrical charge, even through the agony of sensing the life support systems in his suit begin to malfunction. He had allowed this creature to gain power and now he would destroy this threat once and for all. Moving resolutely toward the reactor shaft, he lifted his arms, prepared to hurl his master over the edge — prepared to follow him into the void and end this conflict once and for all.

**BREAK BREAK BREAK**

This was pain. Curled in a ball on the ground, unable to cope with a world that encompassed only agony, Obi Wan tried to move past the physical torment. Anakin needed

him.

**BREAK BREAK BREAK**

She saw him, her husband, her beloved, her hero, about to sacrifice himself. No disguises now. She had abandoned the droid shell once she had gotten past the emperors' guards. Clinging to the shadows, she had hurried, hoping to get to Anakin in time.

There was no time. She raised her blaster and fired.

Did Palpatine gasp in surprise? She didn't care. Before she could pride herself on a well aimed shot as what was left of the emperor tumbled out of Anakin's arms, her horror grew as Anakin lost his balance and started to topple over the edge.

She ran but she knew she could never make it in time. He would fall into the reactor shaft. She would lose him. How could she lose him again?

"No! Anakin!"

**BREAK BREAK BREAK**

Padmé.

He had been prepared to die, been ready to plummet to his death, to let loose his connection to this world and to those he loved in the knowledge that his last actions might atone in some small part for all of his mistakes. But now he was dangling, one prosthetic hand clutched tightly to the railing clinging to life, desperate to find out if Padmé was truly there, if she was safe.

His suit was breaking down. His strength was giving out. And then he saw Obi Wan, leaning over the reactor shaft, reaching down and grabbing him by the hand.

## Chapter 20

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### Chapter 20

A.N. Thank you so much for reviewing. Some possible angst ahead but keep in mind I am writing this fanfic because I want a fluffy happy ending.

Padmé had reached Obi-Wan's side. She saw the strain marking the older man's face and knowing her own strength would be little help, sought something, anything to use. Inspiration struck and she grabbed the grappling hook forgotten in her pocket from where she had taken a stormtrooper's kit. After hearing the story of Luke and Leia's daring escape, she had thought the tool might come in handy.

There was no time for self-congratulations. Heart pounding in her chest, she quickly threw the hook around a railing and lowered the cord, trying to loop it around Ani before his glove slipped from Obi-Wan's grasp.

Obi-Wan turned his head to smile wanly at her once Anakin had managed to secure himself. Together Padmé and Obi-Wan managed to pull him up. It was a bit difficult because Obi-Wan refused to let go of Ani's gloved hand.

... BREAK... BREAK... BREAK...

"You didn't let go" he rasped. Obi-Wan could feel Anakin's wonder through the force. And for a moment he was ashamed, thinking of that long ago day on Mustafar when he had left Anakin for dead. If he had known then... But Padmé had known, had believed even then. He watched as Anakin's terrifying masked face turned towards his long-suffering wife, and tenderly touched her cheek.

"No, I didn't. I won't ever again. I will always believe in you, Anakin." Obi-Wan promised silently. He knew Anakin could sense his vow, and was grateful. Affection welled up in Obi-Wan for his former padawan. The love he had had to deny for years, first as a Jedi not allowed to think of a family and then as a relic of a destroyed order forced to view his brother as his greatest enemy, now expanded freely. He had had lost friends. He had had lost loves. But losing Anakin had hurt the most.

....BREAK... BREAK....BREAK...

There were things he wanted to tell his beloved. But most of all, as he lay there on the floor of the Death Star, he wanted to see her once again without the mask.

"Padmé, please remove..."

"No!" she interrupted, horrified. "You'll die."

"I'm dying anyway, Padmé."

He turned to Obi-Wan ready to implore his friend to help in this last request. He watched as his old friend, the man he had loved and hated as a father, turned to Padmé with the

knowledge that nothing could be done. Obi-Wan would be able to sense his failing life force. But at least Anakin Skywalker would die a free man — filled with the light of the force.

“You cannot give up, Anakin Skywalker!” Padmé cried out. “How dare you blame me for giving up and dying when you are ready to do the same!”

“It’s not the same thing at all,” Anakin snapped upset that Padmé was viewing his impending death in such a nonsensical light. His argument was shaken as the entire Death Star quaked with the impact of a direct hit.

...BREAK... BREAK... BREAK...

She refused to give in to his first maudlin and now panicked bid for self-sacrifice. This was their second chance. She helped Obi-Wan, who clearly needed to be immersed in bacta after force lightening, drag Ani to a shuttle, ignoring her husband’s terrifyingly weakening protests that he should be left behind.

She demanded he be quiet and save his strength. Then, she wished she hadn’t said that. Oh please let her have years of arguing with Ani, decades of making up.

She piloted the shuttle to Endor. If only she could have sat next to Ani, but Obi-Wan was in no shape to fly. At times, she thought they had escaped the death star only to lose their lives in the chaotic firefight between imperial pilots, whether in tie-fighters or destroyers, and the rebel ships. Too often, she failed to dodge the debris from the exploded Death Star.

They landed on Endor. Immediately, Padmé raced to Anakin’s side. Only to sink to her knees as she saw Obi-Wan’s expression. “No!” she wailed. “No! Anakin, please come back to me!”

## Chapter 21

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### Chapter 21

The force enveloped him. Embraced him like he remembered his mother did when she comforted him as a boy. Shone down upon him as he always imagined a proud father would — as he had always hoped Obi-Wan would.

“You have fulfilled your destiny, Anakin” the force communicated.

The force was urging him to rest. The light was calling to him to expand outwards and join all the other sentient beings, past, present, and future.

And yet...

“You can see them.”

He was almost afraid to look — except fear had no place here in this life beyond. There was Luke and Leia, with an arm about their mother, watching as his body was placed on the pyre in Jedi fashion. Obi-Wan was talking insistently, smiling through his tears, able to express his relief that Anakin had not died a Sith.

“Your legend will grow, Anakin. Few will choose to remember the atrocities you have committed in light of your last, stunning example of heroism.”

He knew that. It was a comfort. And yet watching Padmé...

“If you go back, you will have to fight again. You will face scrutiny. Your loved ones will disagree with you. You have never truly reconciled your beliefs with theirs.”

If he went back? Could he? There was no if. He wanted this new chance. He longed to be with his family.

“Then you shall go, Anakin. You shall walk not just the skies but through the veils of life and death. Go find your happiness my son of the suns.”

...BREAK... BREAK... BREAK...

Luke, about to set the torch to the pyre noticed it first. Darth Vader’s lifeless suit had disappeared and in its place was a gasping, completely live, and healthy Anakin Skywalker.

...BREAK... BREAK... BREAK

The reunion was about as chaotic as could be expected. A giddy Anakin was embraced by a beaming Padmé, a wondrous Luke, a shocked but happy Leia, an amazed Obi-Wan, and even by Han Solo — who would later deny that he had ever done such a thing.

Anakin’s very real death as Darth Vader, though temporary, had one huge benefit: no one in the newly formed Republic was willing to try the hero turned villain turned hero. If a segment grumbled over the former dark lord’s new immunity, they didn’t wish to challenge him. And Anakin, although easily able to imagine assassins targeting his family, let his fears



dwindle to a wisely simmering vigilance rather than the paranoia and terror which had once characterized his every action.

Not that things were perfect. The force had promised him that he would have to fight and fight he did. Although he left with Padmé for Naboo to enjoy the comforts of a body complete with four limbs, working lungs, and an eager wife could provide, he departed only after a serious altercation with his children. Luke, Leia, and Han had left for Bakura to answer a distress call and only Luke and Leia's insistence — and the need to watch Obi-Wan — had prevented him from joining his family on a mission which had nearly separated them yet again.

But they had survived. They had saved the day. His children were capable of heroism and goodness. And as his children fought to make a difference in the world, he fought with them again. Some arguments were about ideologies. Some dealt with his years of pragmatic cruelty. Some simply occurred because he had missed out on being a father for so long.

And Padmé was pregnant again. She was nearly as full of joy and worry as Anakin. Luke was embarrassed but pleased for them. Somehow, he never minded disposing of soiled clothes in the fresher or rocking his little sister to sleep. Leia was happy too, if a little disconcerted by her growing family. Still she enjoyed visiting. Obi-Wan was there for this birth as well, taking the baby in his arms and cooing about "Uncle Ben being there for her."

"You know old man, I always thought of you as a father, not as a brother. Guess that makes you Azlyn's grandfather."

Obi-Wan's shock was one of Anakin's favorite moments of his new life. It certainly made up for the lecture his mentor gave him when he left his newest lightsaber.

He had left the old red one aboard the Death Star. He hadn't felt like using the one from the Clone Wars. So much had changed. He had watched his daughter's tempestuous romance with Han Solo, torn between laughter and fury as the space rat saved his daughter from her own sense of duty, kidnapping her as a prelude to marriage. He had maintained his own composure when Leia had finally announced her own foray into parenthood. Obi-wan had delighted in calling Anakin a grandfather, until Anakin had teasingly reminded him that for all intents and purposes Obi-Wan was a great-grandfather. Still, Anakin was shocked when Azlyn ran to him to say his son had given former Emperor's hand turned smuggler, Mara Jade, his old lightsaber.

Perhaps the galaxy would never truly be at peace, but Anakin had long become resigned to his family's hapless position in the fight for justice. In the meantime, he could only thank the force for this new chance. For bringing Padmé, his good angel, back into his life, and showing him how to be the man he had once vowed to be. There were days when he longed to force choke his neighbors, but finally living with his family in the open, free of everything but the bonds of love and the dictates of his conscience, were making Anakin Skywalker's life a pleasure.

He turned to Padmé, still beautiful, always beautiful to him, even though grey threaded both their curls. She looked at him, waiting, always waiting for him and smiled. "Let's go celebrate with our family."

The END.

A.N. Thank you for reading.